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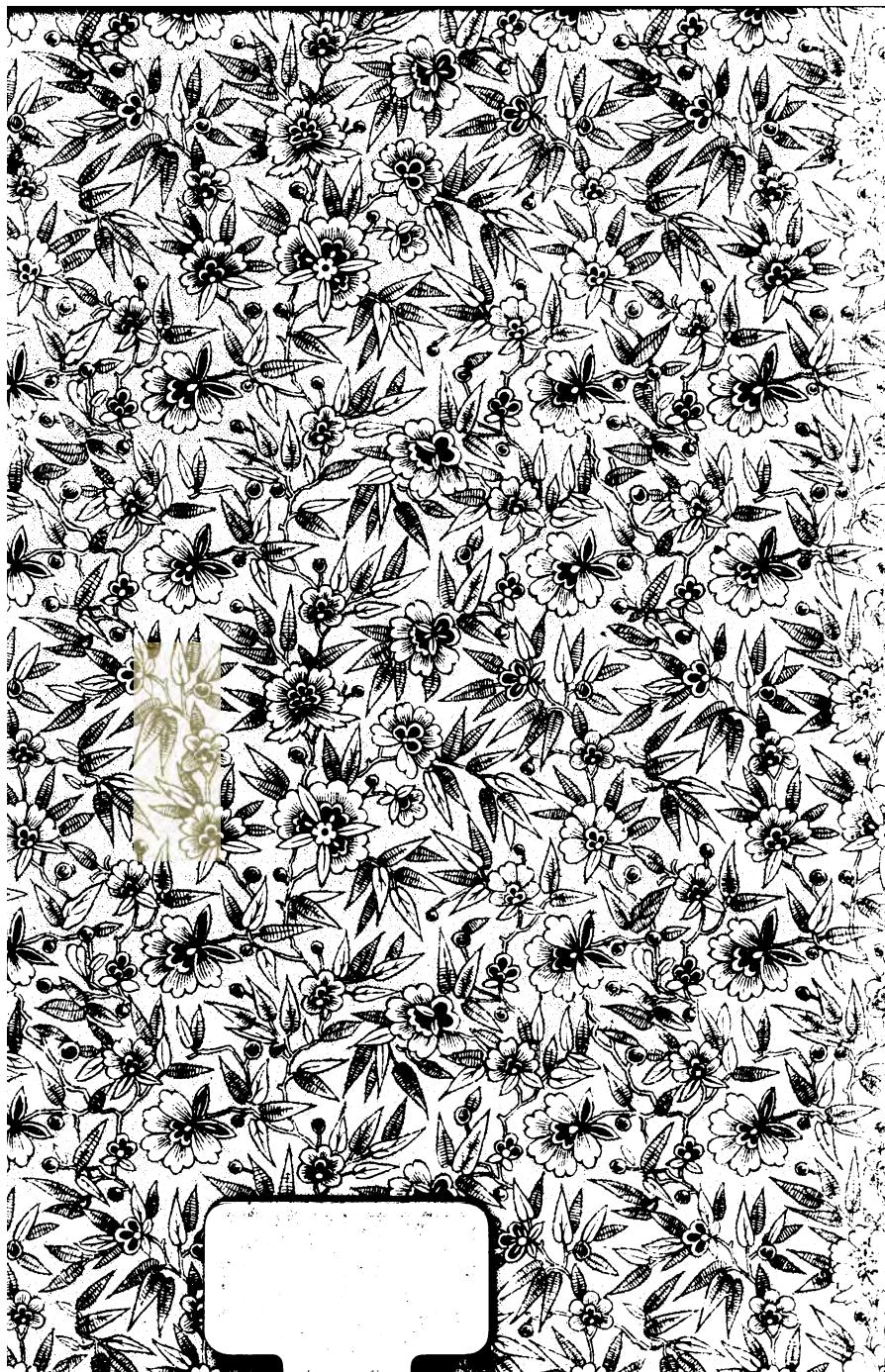
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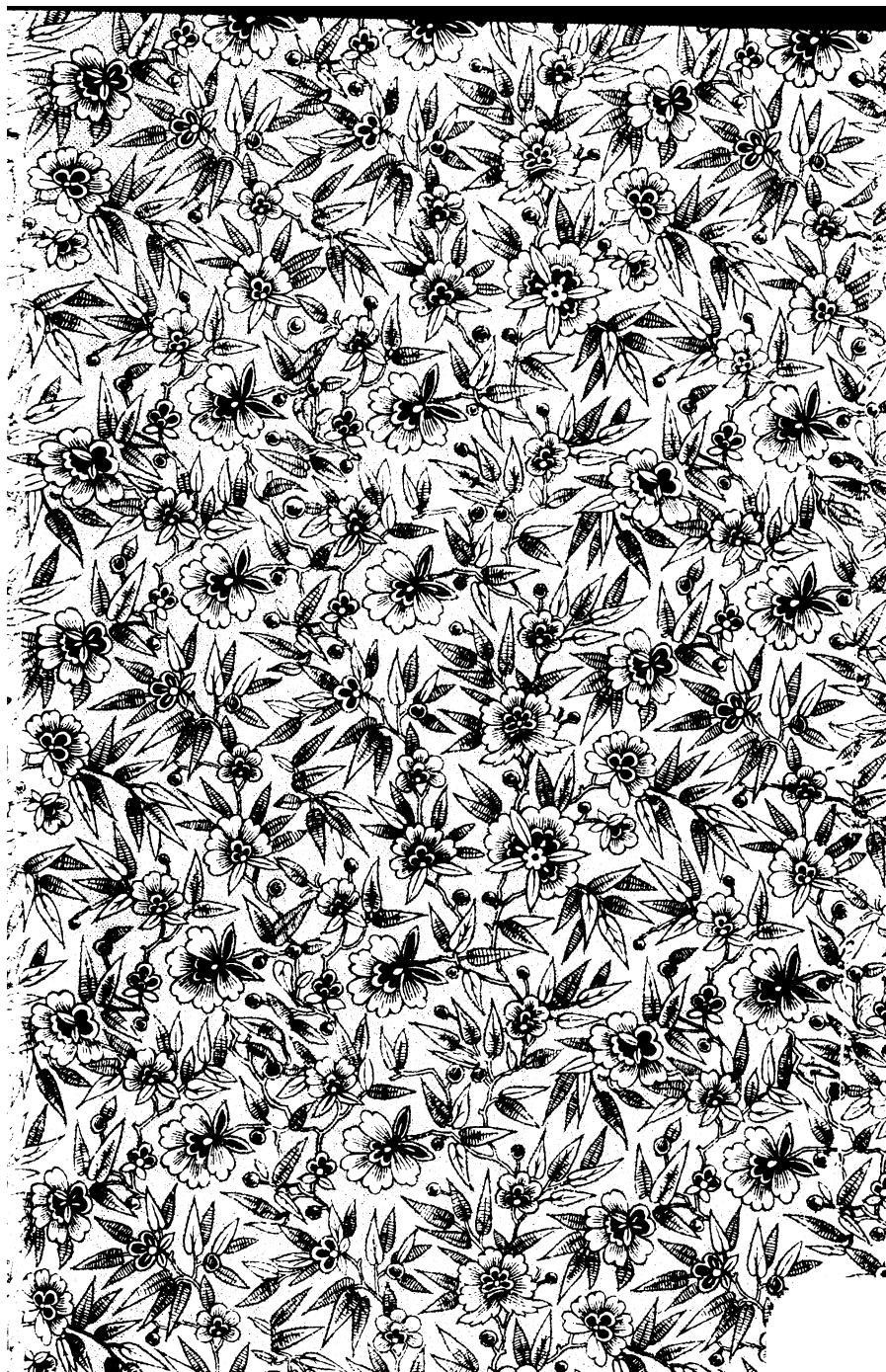
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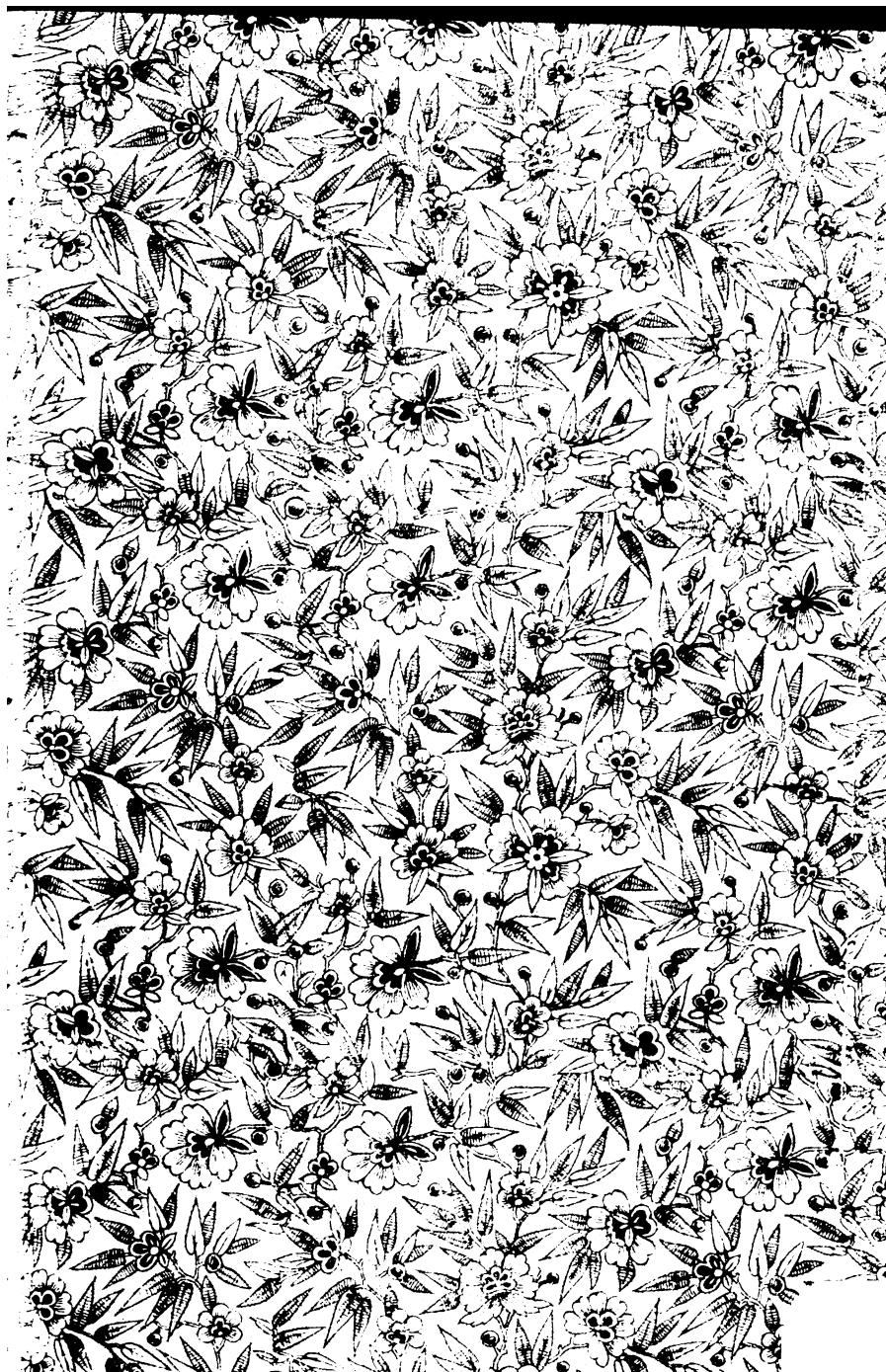
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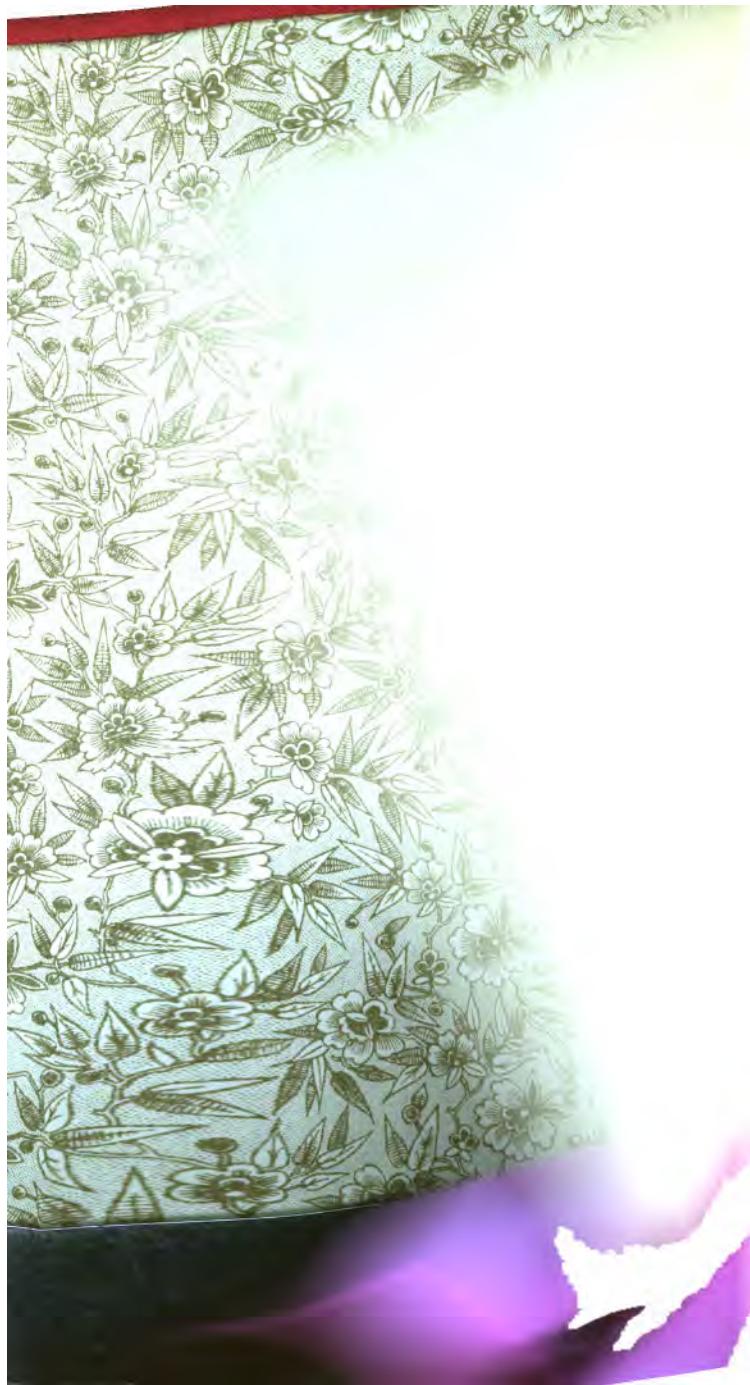














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BETWEEN THE HEATHER AND THE NORTHERN SEA.

CHAPTER I.

“I WOULD I HAD SOME FLOWERS O’ THE
SPRING ! ”

“ The stars of midnight shall be dear
To her ; and she shall lean her ear
In many a secret place
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face.”

WORDSWORTH.

To have lived but for one spring in the very heart of spring is to have had a joy that might be desired by the angels.

No poem, no picture could give for an instant the sense of universal benediction that comes down with the full sudden bursting of springtide over the land. There is always a

suddenness, always one morning when the tidings are flashed in glad thrilling notes from bough to bough ; when the sunshine is sweeter and milder—the air fuller of quiet promise of blessing. There is always one day when the valleys laugh and sing more gloriously, and when the hills are more joyful together before the Lord.

To every “ flower o’ the spring ” there is a season, from the first snowdrop that peeps from under the dry, dead leaves at the bottom of the wood, to the last hawthorn bud that bursts on the top of the late white hedgerow.

And yet there is always as it were a meeting of seasons—a time when the flowers come up that they may be together for a while, that together they may try in their beautiful way to make more glad the heart of man—more glad and more good.

“ One moment now may give us more
Than fifty years of reason :
Our minds shall drink at every pore
The spirit of the season.

“ Some silent laws our hearts may make,
Which they shall long obey ;
We for the year to come may take
Our temper from to-day.”

Ah! for many years, if that “inward eye which is the bliss of solitude” be but keen enough of vision.

Yet better even than the after-vision of poets and seers is one free, fresh hour when your footstep falls upon the daisies, having nowhere else to fall for the crowding of them; when you feel upon your cheek and forehead the cool dainty airs that come up from the blue sea, and reach you through the boughs of tufted larches and tasselled willows; and when your ear listens entranced—always newly entranced—to the voice of the cuckoo that comes to you from the whinbrake on the hill.

There were places in the neighbourhood of Murk-Marishes where Genevieve Bartholomew stood alone and stirless while hours passed by unnoted; dim hollows in the fir copses ankle-deep with wild hyacinth; woodland paths blue with forget-me-not; moist becksides glossy with unfolding fronds of fern. The sloping sides of the Gill were overgrown with a rich luxuriance of large pale primroses; with fragile, trembling, pink-tipped anemones; and dark scented violets were

there, with timid white woodruff. The purple orchis stood up strong and firm in the green pasture-lands ; the glowing yellow Mary-buds filled the marshes ; the daffodils

“ That come before the swallow dares,
And take the winds of March with beauty ”—

these danced only in favoured spots ; one spot most favoured being the orchard at the back of the cottage at Netherbank.

Genevieve had hardly known what to make of the thick clusters of crisp green lanceolate leaves that had thrust themselves through the grass and the dead undergrowth in such fine profusion. Her father kept an amused and deliberate silence, even though he was called out from the studio daily to witness some amazing change, or growth, or new development. It was so with every leaf and bud that was responding to the spring sunshine in the little front garden. Everything gave a quite distinct delight, because it was so good as to come up *there*, and be watched by one who had never before watched a flower growing, and unfolding, and coming to its tints, its curves, and full perfections. The daffodils were somewhat

slow of development, as became their stately ways; the slender green buds came very gradually to their fuller form and finer tint. Then all at once a dozen or so among them began to bow their heads—to be ready for the great crisis of their lives, the crisis proving to the world that their long promise had not been given out of vain self-estimate. They stood there at last, the shell of silver-brown tissue thrown back, the great wide-open, amber-tinted cup quivering proudly on the strong stem, the paler petals standing round like rays round a pictured saint. Yes, they stood there; and they danced to the music of the *Æolian* harp that was in the apple boughs; and the birds sang to the same; and altogether you know that it was good to be at Murk-Marishes in the spring o' the year.

“I wonder if the delight of it could be of too rare a nature to one not used to it?” Noel Bartholomew said one day. He was sitting on the edge of the old draw-well. Genevieve was feeding the pigeons that had come wheeling down at her call. It was just the kind of day on which to be idle—to feel

that idleness meant growth and refreshing, and deliverance from spiritual stagnation. But Noel Bartholomew had enjoyed several such days now, and he was beginning to feel that they might have their dangers.

Genevieve, throwing down her last handful of corn, came and sat beside him, and heard all that he had to say of the soft dreamful mood that had come over him.

“I cannot will my will nor work my work,”

he said, “and yet I feel well and happy, or rather happier. It is strange, but I cannot help feeling that this calm is like the calm that comes before a storm.”

“A hail-storm, perhaps, hailing new ideas down upon you.”

“No; I am not waiting for ideas. The ‘Enone’ is all but done. Then I shall finish the ‘Sir Galahad;’ and after that I have it in my mind that I should like to paint a landscape—a great wide sweep of Langbarugh Moor, with a dark grey sky torn and flying before the wind.”

“Good my father! That must be done. . . . But if I were a painter, now here is

my subject coming towards me as shyly as you please. Three little maidens with three little smiles, bearing three little bunches of flowers of the field. And there! three little curtseys dropped like one, to show how manners linger in likely places."

"Do you know that Keturah has decided that not another of your flower-maidens is to be admitted into the kitchen this year?" said Mr. Bartholomew when the children had turned to go, having offered their flowers and received the usual reward of thanks and smiles. "She declared to me this morning that there were seventeen of them between school hours and sunset last evening."

"Little dears!"

"I believe you bribe them?"

"That is precisely what Mrs. Caton said the other day, when I went in laden with the flowers that the children had brought to me as I passed through the village."

"What else did Mrs. Caton say?"

"She said many things. Would they interest you?"

"Some of them might. Mrs. Caton often says interesting things."

“So she does! especially when they are a little spiteful.”

“That is spiteful of you, my dear.”

“It is; and I recall it.”

“What made you say it? It was not like you. Was your visit an unpleasant one?”

“It was not particularly pleasant. Why should Mrs. Caton have asked me about—about Mr. Kirkoswald? She wanted to know if I could tell her why he had stayed three months at Usselby after writing to tell old Charlock that he was coming for three nights? . . . How do people get to know of such things? And why should they care?”

“Was that the worst you had to endure?”

“There was more of the same kind. I was asked what Mr. Kirkoswald was doing in London now,” replied Genevieve, her colour deepening to a lovelier tint, even under her father’s gaze. “Mrs. Caton had heard that he had gone up to buy furniture. I could only tell her that I did not know; and that Mr. Kirkoswald had told you that he was going up on business. I had also to confess that I did not know when he was coming back; that I did not know how long he meant

to stay at Usselby when he did come ; and that I did not know whether he was ever going to live on the Continent again or not. And all the while I had the satisfaction of feeling that neither Mrs. Caton nor her friends quite believed in my ignorance."

" Well, that was rather trying for you. . . . It is, as you say, wonderful how people get to know of things in small towns ; more wonderful still that they should take so inexplicable an interest in what does not concern them."

" Oh, it is not what they know that makes the strangeness of it ; it is what they conjecture ! If they would only cease from conjecture ! "

They were hardly likely to cease with such attractive ground to go upon ; the delicate nature of it, the uncertainty of its present passages, the important possibilities it held for the future—all these things, that should have inspired a kind silence, were as so many incentives to gossip, to flippant suggestion, to uncharitable conclusion.

And yet it is easily conceivable that there was not in that Thurkeld Abbas coterie a

single individual who would have failed in one single particular to take the part of the Good Samaritan, had Genevieve Bartholomew been found wounded in any of the dark way-sides of life, or in any way needing compassion of theirs. It is strange how a human being will stab another to the heart with an unkind word, who could never bear to see that other with an aching finger without trying to relieve the pain. Why should we blunder so? Why but because we have facilely fallen into an ill grove, and make no effort to get out therefrom.

CHAPTER II.

A BEGINNING OF GRIEFS.

“To this the courteous prince
Accorded with his wonted courtesy,
Courtesy with a touch of traitor in it.”

Idyls of the King.

OBEDIENT to one of the sudden impulses by which his life was mainly ordered, Noel Bartholomew set out alone one morning for a day's sketching. He was not fond of going alone; but not knowing whither his mood and the aspect of the scenery might lead him, he declined the offer of his daughter's company.

“You will be glad of a day for letter-writing,” he said. “Letters from London have been few and far between of late.”

“People are sure to forget us if we forget

them," said Genevieve, feeling some pangs of conscience at the remembrance of a pile of letters docketed "unanswered" on her writing-table.

"Anyhow, they will forget us!" replied her father as he turned away.

He was not in a very equable frame of mind. Out-of-doors the spring sunshine intoxicated him, so to speak. He could say things, and think them, and dream them, that were quite impossible to him in the less stimulating atmosphere of his own studio or the cottage fireside. But there was always reaction; always after each hour of expansion, of spontaneity, of vivid, passionate insight, there came a dozen hours of doubt, of vague, nameless pain, of chill sitting by the ashes of the dead fire.

It was not new to him, this alternation, this change from swift flight over the sunlit regions of possible achievement to chains and darkness on the barren ground. It is new to no man over whose soul the thing called genius tyrannizes. But Bartholomew was becoming aware of changes in the manner of the tyranny; aware, too, that his seasons

of desolation were more prolonged, more frequent; worse than all, they were in a manner unaccountable.

That long dead time of gloom which had followed upon his bereavement had not been in itself a matter for wonder, for perplexity. It had been understood of all men, up to their measure, and most men had sympathized—that up to their measure also.

It was different now. There had been no new bereavement, no new shock, and the paralysis of his creative powers was in itself of a different nature. It was creeping upon him by slow and irregular degrees.

This was his own idea. He did not share it. No one divined it.

Genevieve only saw that since that autumn day when he had set his palette in the new studio at Netherbank, he had worked more or less steadily, and with more or less of success. She had anticipated a period of comparative inactivity; she had almost hoped for it of late, that her father might have rest. A long, peaceful, unvexed rest that was not the rest of incapacity would give him back the power to place himself where he had stood

when he was most conspicuous in the sight of men, or higher still, it might be. He had not touched the limit yet; of this she was certain.

So it was that this depression of mood did not move her to any new or lively fear. "Anyhow, they will forget us!" he said as he went out; and Genevieve smiled, watching him as he crossed the field where the young green barley was springing. "He will have a vision of another and more glorious *Œnone* before he reaches Birkrigg Gill," the girl said to herself, knowing that the *Œnone* he had already created was approaching a finer perfection than anything he had given to the world yet.

Her prophecy was fulfilled, not only in the spirit, but also to the letter. As Noel Bartholomew went on through the low-lying pasture lands that were all golden with the great marsh-marigolds, dappled with daisies, musical with the songs of the thrush and the lark, he thought no more of the neglect of men; and the sense of the lifelong under-appreciation that he could not but be aware of ceased to be a pain to him. It would be

with him as it had been with Millet—he would sleep, sleep soundly, and men would awake to the knowledge of him and his work when he knew it not. It was very possible on such a morning to feel as Keats had felt, that the daisies were growing over him already, and there was no shadow of grief in the feeling ; rather was there a new longing for this perfectness of rest, of which the daisies were whispering, in the lonely marish lands.

Neither was this mood a permanent one. The next was fuller of hope for the life that now is. The world had not seen his last and best work. A few weeks more and it should be seen. And then and there, thinking of his picture's reception, there sprang another vision-picture to his brain—a fair young Nausicaa, surprised by the wandering Ulysses as she stood among the sedges by the side of the rippling river. He saw her standing as plainly as if she had stood there among the reeds of Murk-Marishes, so plainly that he could wonder at the roundness of her strong white arm, at the grace of her Greek dress, at the surprise that was on her

parted lips, and in her lovely eyes—eyes blue as the forget-me-nots that were round him everywhere in Birkkigg Gill. His way was no more lonely, nor long. Before he awoke from his vision he was out on the hill-top that was almost opposite to Yarrell Croft, and a picture, lovelier than the loveliest dream his brain had ever wrought, lay stretched out before him—a picture that would have tempted him to despair, if nature might so tempt a man.

It was a scene for Turner, and for none other since. The mystery of soft, sunny, pale gold vapour that was upon the distant dales, veiling everything, and with so transparent a veil that nothing was hid, was hardly a thing to be attempted without forethought. Noel Bartholomew sat a long time thinking before he began. When he did begin he worked with a will, and the result was not wholly distasteful to him. Yet he was not satisfied. No artist, no poet, no sculptor is acquainted with satisfaction.

He was standing back from his easel, wondering if he had made the cloud-shadow that was upon the trees that divided one dale

from another dark enough. He was afraid of disturbing the sense of mystery that he had achieved. It was the one thing that he had desired to achieve.

Quite suddenly, as he stood there, he became aware of footsteps close to him. A figure was coming striding up the hill-side pathway that was all grown over with meeting briars and wild raspberry-canapes. "Oh, it is Mr. Richmond!" he said, holding out his hand. "I did not know that you were at home; we had heard that you were in London."

"No such luck! My sister is there; she's been there this three weeks," said the young man with a touch of something that might be displeasure, or might be disconsolateness. "But don't let me interrupt you," he added courteously. "I saw you were here; I could see you from the billiard-room window, and I thought I would just come over and watch you a bit, if you don't mind. . . . It's awfully slow being by one's self."

"That seems to be the general finding of poor humanity," replied the artist. "And so far from objecting to your coming, I am

obliged by it. . . . What do you think of the sketch ? ”

“ Ah, that’s capital ! Now I should call that first-class, if it were a little bit clearer. Why, you’ve even got Craig’s old house and the stunted oak by the mere. It’s water-colour, isn’t it ? What a splendid picture it would make in oil, wouldn’t it ?—especially if you could put a little more colour into it. You’ve got that distance to perfection. Still, I always like oil-painting best. Shall you do that over again in oil ? ”

“ Yes, probably.”

“ And I suppose you intend it for London, for some of the exhibitions ? ”

“ That is not certain. . . . I very seldom send my work to the exhibitions.”

“ Don’t you ? Well, I thought I hadn’t seen your things about much. They’re awfully good.”

“ They please you ? ”

“ Yes, they do ; and do you know, I’ve been thinking a good bit that I should like to have something of yours—something really first-class, you know. I thought once I’d ask you to paint me. And then I thought

I would wait a year or two before I was painted."

"You are quite right in waiting. Character can only come with years. Holbein used to say 'that fifty years was the right age for a woman to have her portrait painted."

"Fifty! Oh, come, he might as well have said a hundred at once. I sha'n't wait till I'm fifty. And I don't see why I need wait any longer to have some sort of a picture of yours; that is, if you will paint me one. I should like to have one specially done for myself."

Was the master of Yarrell Croft feeling for once that he actually was the master, now that its mistress was away? He was quite aware of a sudden desire to make an experiment as to the extent of his authority. There might be danger; but the danger was not without its attractions.

"I have no objection at all to paint a picture for you," said Bartholomew, saying it as much out of his natural good-will and tendency toward concession, as out of any other consideration. "But I should wish

you to have a clear idea in your own mind as to the kind of picture you would like."

"Oh, I know quite well what I like, and an idea has just come into my head that I think would do capitally. Why shouldn't you turn a little just where you are now, and paint that hill-side and Yarrell Croft into the picture you are doing ? It would be all right, you know. If you come a bit farther back you can see the house, and all that distance that you have painted at the same time."

"So I can," said Bartholomew, feeling that that square block of stone would destroy every particle of sentiment that the picture could ever have. Still, it was very natural that the youth should wish, beyond all other things, to have a picture of his own home, the house where he had been born, and where he had lived his untroubled life. Bartholomew made no objection ; he would paint Yarrell Croft, since its owner wished to have it painted.

He sat a little longer, working at the distance. He would have to come again, and yet again, perhaps many times, if he did this thing that Cecil Richmond wished to have

done. He felt instinctively that nothing in the way of generalization would be appreciated. Every window and door, every tree and shrub, every gate and every hedge-row would have to stand in its place. He seemed to see his sketchy, vaporous picture growing into a coloured photograph before his eyes.

Cecil Richmond had seated himself among the moss and the thick primrose-leaves that covered the bank-side ; and he sat there with his head thrown back, his arms folded, a cigar between his lips—the very personification of youth satisfied with itself, with its antecedents, with its present prosperity, with its future prospects. Bartholomew could not help looking at him from time to time, wondering at him, not envying him.

Almost he liked him. If he were uncultivated he was ingenuous, or seemed so. If he were not without ostentation, neither was he without the small courtesies and deferences that lie on the surface of social life, and are so pleasant and useful.

“ You will come over and have some luncheon ? ” he said as Bartholomew began to

pack up his brushes ; and it may be that the artist would have been glad to accept the invitation had nothing prevented him. But he was prevented. The knowledge that he would not have gone to the house for luncheon had Diana Richmond been there, was sufficient to keep him from it when she was not there.

The invitation was pressed, and again declined ; but Bartholomew went homeward by the same way that young Richmond went.

“If you are going back by the moor,” said Cecil, “come through the gardens ; it will save you half a mile at least. . . . Have you ever been over the place ? It was a priory once, you know—Yarrell Priory. That old archway—you can see it from here—was an arched gateway in the walls of the priory gardens ; so they say. That, and the bits of masonry about it, are all that is left of the old establishment. My great-grandfather built this house, and an old Puritan he must have been. He wouldn’t have the name kept up, but must needs call the house after the field he had built it in. It was not built on the

site of the old priory ; that was too low, too far down in the wood. But that needn't have mattered. We could have kept the name."

" You might resume it, if you chose," suggested Bartholomew.

" So we might ; I've said so to Di scores of times ; but she's as stiff in her own way as a woman can be, and that's saying a lot. . . . But there, that's the archway ; its Gothic, you know. Shouldn't you say it was Gothic ? "

" Yes, certainly I should," said Bartholomew ; " and I should say it is eleventh-century work, if I may judge."

It was a great round-headed arch, with plain round mouldings of solid design. The piers and the capitals were completely covered with the strong green ivy that had flourished there for centuries. The wall on either hand had been covered with rude trellis-work, and the clematis that crept in and out was just bursting into leaf. The young sprays were waving in the breeze. Through the archway you could see an old fountain among the greenery of the inner garden. A pair of

tortoise-shell butterflies were quivering against the blue sky. The pale bright green of hollyhock leaves brightened part of the ground-space ; lilies and irises were coming up nearer to the gate. The boughs of climbing rose-trees fluttered everywhere, making a frame to a scene that could not fail to be suggestive to the eye of an artist of any insight.

“ Why shouldn’t you have this painted instead of the house ? ” asked Bartholomew, with the sense of snatching at means of escape.

“ You think this would make a good picture ? ”

“ Certainly I do. When the summer and autumn flowers are out it must be almost perfect. And garden-scenes are less common than they might be. To say the truth, I have often longed to paint one, and years ago I made some studies of flowers for the purpose ; but I have never seen anything like this to inspire me.”

“ Oh, very well ; then you shall paint both,” said the young man, speaking rather as Disraeli’s Young Duke might have spoken

to Sir Carte Blanche. "How soon can you get them done?"

Bartholomew smiled. "It will take some time to paint two such pictures as you seem to desire," he said; "that is, unless I do them on a very small scale."

"Oh, but I don't want them on a small scale," said Cecil. "I like a picture that you can see across the room as you sit by the fireside."

"There I agree with you," said the painter.

A silence followed. Bartholomew was in a momentary perplexity. Should he ask this new and imperious patron of the fine arts to consider so unimportant a thing as price, or should he not? It evidently was unimportant to him. It was a matter on which Noel Bartholomew had always been stupidly sensitive, and it was quite within the range of things that Cecil Richmond should take offence, and imagine that Bartholomew was sceptical as to his power to pay for the commissions he had given.

So it was that silence came about. The two men parted at the gate that opened into

the field pathways above the house, and Bartholomew went on his way alone. "I can make it all right," he said to himself as he went on. "I need not ask the price I should get in the market."

CHAPTER III.

LETHE'S GLOOM, BUT NOT ITS QUIET.

“ But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true
Than those that have more cunning to be strange.”

SHAKESPEARE.

WERE the wheels of life beginning to drag a little heavily in the thatched cottage in the barley field as the spring days went on ?

If it were so, it could only be a very little, there was so much to be done, so much to be cared for. New interests went on increasing, as they always do when people are capable of being interested ; and the old interests went on deepening and growing into the life of things to an extent that could only have been found if some stern fate had ordered that they should be suddenly torn up by the roots.

Sometimes, remembering that the home at

Netherbank was, after all, only a temporary arrangement, Genevieve would feel as if her pulse stopped for the moment. Day by day the little spot of earth was growing dearer ; day by day the fact was becoming more plainly written that for good or for ill her life was one with another life, and it seemed to the girl, in her intense love for the place, as if the affinity which existed between that other soul and her own could hardly be quite the same affinity if it had to exist apart from the moor and the sea, from the birds and the flowers, from the sun on the hills, and the breezes on the cliff-top, from all that made gladsome the days that came and went in the neighbourhood of Murk-Marishes.

They were gladsome still for Genevieve, especially when she was out among the gladness, though no letter came, nor any tidings. It was very foolish, she knew, this half-expectancy, this childish disappointment. How could he write with no pretext for writing ? Still, vague wonders came and went, and innocent recallings of the experience of her girlish friends. Sometimes darker visions came. What if Mr. Kirkoswald had yielded

to one of his old impulses, and had gone again to the Continent to remain for years? What if it were so? What then? Well, nothing even then but trust and faith, perfect faith in the friendship of George Kirkoswald.

It seemed to her that she had so much ground for her faith; though it was not a matter of proportion.

Going up to the Haggs one day, and entering by the stackyard, she had overheard Dorothy Craven crooning a little song, an ancient love ditty, that ran thus—

“Nowe rise up wightlye, man, for shame,
Never lye so cowardlee,
For it is told in my father’s halle
You dye for love of me.”

“I did not know that you could sing, Miss Craven,” said Genevieve gaily, going round between the stacks to where Dorothy was spreading her laces and linens carefully on the hedge. Dorothy blushed like a school girl, but she smiled too. She was not annoyed; neither was she so sorrowful as she had been. It was easy to see that in some way or other life was going more easily for her.

It was not much that she had to tell, but she told it as if knowing that Genevieve might have more than one reason for being glad to hear it told.

"I can only guess who's behind it all," she said, "but let him be who he will, I hope he'll have his reward. I was about at t' far end wi' one thing an' another, an' Mr. Damer threatening to sell us up for t' rent if 'twasn't paid afore May-day. There's some influence somewhere, or he'd never ha' written the letter he has written to me, tellin' me 'at if a little more time 'ud be a convenience I can take it, without feelin' anyways anxious. Think o' that! an' as polite a letter as if it had been written to a duchess."

"Then you can see your way now?" Genevieve asked.

There was a little darkening of Dorothy's face; poor face, it had grown so used to darkening!

"It'll all depend upon the harvest," she said. "One good old-fashioned harvest would set me on my feet again nicely. It all depends o' that."

Genevieve could not help wondering, as

she went away again, what effect this little improvement in Miss Craven's prospects would have upon the hopes of Ishmael Crudas. Still it was not to be expected that Mr. Kirkoswald—for his was the influence that had wrought upon Mr. Damer—this she knew, and Dorothy knew it too—it was not to be expected of him that he should refrain from helping Miss Craven to stand firm over a crisis, because there was a chance that if she should fail to stand she might be driven to a marriage to which she would not consent willingly. He might be sorry for Ishmael Crudas, but he was too chivalrous not to be more sorry still for a woman who was fighting the battle of life bravely, though the odds were so desperately against her. It was only a little thing that he had done, but Genevieve was glad that he had done it, glad and proud too, though she could take no credit to herself. George Kirkoswald had made a careless-seeming promise to her, and he had kept it carefully, but he would have done the same had the promise been made to any human being that breathed.

And then in the fulness of her heart, and

in the lightness of spirit that comes when your foot is on the turf, she spoke aloud.

“He could never, never fail from his word !” she said.

And though she spoke softly and sweetly, something caught up the sound and gave it back again, as if with a touch of mockery—

“He could never, never fail from his word !”

She remembered it afterward, the repetition where no echo was, the curious touch of contradiction that seemed to be in the repeating voice, even though that voice was still her own.

She was going homeward now, down through the bramble brakes that were green with the young crisp leaves, through the lanes all golden and blue. At the stile by the barley-field she stopped a moment, listening as if suddenly compelled to listen ; and again the spoken word came back to her from the upland, spoken as she had meant it this time, as she had intended it out of her full and fervent faith—

“He could never, never fail from his word !”

She was still standing there with her hand on the stile when she saw a small, darkly clad figure stirring inside the hedge. It was Davy Drewe, touching his yellow curls, and coming forward with a blush.

“Were you waiting for me, Davy?” she said, speaking in the half-tender way that had attracted the little fellow so much. “Come with me into the house and have some tea.”

“I mustn’t; I mustn’t stay no longer,” the boy said. “I’ve stayed a long time, an’ it’s my last night at home. Mother said I might come an’ say ‘good-bye’ as I was goin’ oot foreign.”

“You are going on a foreign voyage? Poor child! and poor mother! Why, how long will it be before you are back again, Davy?”

The boy turned pale, very pale, and he lifted his eloquent blue eyes to Genevieve’s face; but no words would come, or at any rate not the words he would have said.

He could only say that he did not know when he would be back again. The ship was going from port to port, and from land to land, the owners themselves hardly know-

ing whither. Davy did not seem to care whither, so that he was out on the wild waters again.

“Are you so fond of the sea?” Genevieve asked wonderingly.

“No, miss, I’m no way fond on it,” the child said, speaking as if perplexed by his own feeling. “But Ah don’t never rest when Ah’m ashore.”

“You do not? . . . Ah, that does seem strange! . . . But you will not forget me, Davy? And you shall have this,” Genevieve said, drawing a tiny book from her pocket, a much-worn copy of “The Imitation.” “You shall have this to make you think of me, and to remind you of that day when you were so nearly drowned. I have my little ‘Viking’ to remind me of you. And I shall pray for you, and sometimes I shall sing a hymn that is a prayer for all that are in peril on the sea. . . . But I will not keep you any longer now. Your mother will want to have you all to herself to-night. Good-bye, Davy. You will come and see me when you come back again.”

There was no answer, but the wistful light

blue eyes filled with sudden tears as the little lad turned away, and Genevieve, standing by the stile watching him, felt a tear or two steal down her own face for very sympathy. She felt certain that the child had left something unsaid that he had wanted to say. Poor little fellow! The memory of him would always be interwoven with the other memories of that fearful day in Soulsgrif Bight. It was his mother's distress for him that had drawn Genevieve thither, and if she had never gone down to the Bight how different life might have been, how colourless, how cold, how empty, how inconceivably unblest!

She still stood there, lost in a kind of reverie that often came over her now. The sun was turning the young leaves of a sycamore in the hedgerow to morsels of glowing transparent amber, a man was ploughing in a brown field beyond, the sea-gulls and crows were boldly following him. A plover was crying across the upland, some lambs were bleating in a meadow across the lane. They were bleating rather piteously, Genevieve thought, but she did not understand

the appeal. Presently she saw that one of the mother-ewes had got out through the hedge, and was running down the lane, crying as she went, then standing still, and looking back, crying again, and finally hurrying to the hollow in the hedge silently. Over and over the anxious mother repeated all this, and then Genevieve, going out from the barley-field, saw that a tiny white lamb had been caught among the dense, prickly under-growth of the hedge. Again the mother stood bleating to it, then she ran on, looking back enticingly, eagerly, saying plainly, "Follow me, try to follow me!"

What could be done in such a strait? Genevieve wondered, endeavouring in vain to extricate the small creature herself. She would ask her father to come—but no, here was help nearer. Some one was coming down from the moor, some one on horseback, and seeing a daintily clad figure in the lane, he came more quickly.

"Oh, you have come back! you have come back again!" Genevieve exclaimed, hardly knowing the words she used, in her sudden surprise and gladness. There was a glad,

living light in her eyes, a glow of glad colour on her face. She stood there, watching George Kirkoswald, who had dismounted, and was taking the lamb in his arms tenderly, carefully, lest he should tear the wool. Then he put it back into the field again with its mother, using such gentleness as strong men do use, having pity for all weak things.

“ You were sure to come,” said Genevieve, who was waiting for him in the lane, standing there tall, and straight, and happy, and beautiful—beautiful with a quite new beauty ; or so George thought as he took her two hands in his silently. “ You were sure to come,” said the girl. “ since I was needing help.”

“ Then you have never needed me till to-day ? ”

“ I did not say that.”

“ No ; you left me to infer it.”

“ I am not answerable for your inferences,” she said, speaking the ungentle words quite gently. . . . “ What else do you infer ? ”

“ I infer that you have been very happy these five weeks.”

“ That is correct ; I have been happy.”

“ During my absence ? ”

“ During your absence.”

They still stood there in the shadow of the crisp green hedgerow, through which the yellow sun was struggling. Genevieve had disengaged one hand, and was patting the red-roan flank of Bevis. The first corn-crake of the year was uttering its rythmical “ crek-crek ” in the meadows beyond.

“ Haven’t you any more questions to ask ? ” said Genevieve, breaking the silence that George did not seem disposed to break. Was that the form his great gladness was taking ? Hers was taking the form of an unusual gaiety.

“ I have many questions to ask,” he said, “ some of them important ones ; but I shall not ask them now, since they need important answers, which I see I should not get in your present mood.”

“ Then ask unimportant ones.”

Mr. Kirkoswald paused a moment.

“ I cannot think of any unimportant thing that concerns you.”

“ That is flattery.”

“ Which you do not like ; that I am aware

of. Then let me see! What have you been doing while I have been away?"

"I have been doing many things. Amongst others I have practised the songs you asked me to practise."

"Thank you. I have brought you some more, which I will bring down to-morrow, if I may."

"We shall be glad to see you."

"As glad as you were to-day?" asked George, in a tone of tenderer and deeper meaning; then, seeing Genevieve's quick hot blush, he hastened to add, "That is unfair. But you would not mind my seeing that you were pleased if you knew all that it is to me. Think for a moment, there is no other person in the world to be glad—I mean not *very* glad, as a sister might be. My comings and goings have been of no account to any one for so many years, I have had so little hope that any one would ever take count of them, that it is more to me than I can tell you to find that my coming is really a little pleasure to you."

"It was not a little pleasure, it was a great deal," said the girl, speaking out of her sim-

plicity, out of her strong pity for his lonely life. "And after all, I was not so happy while you were away; not so very happy as you think."

"Then thank you, a thousand times thank you, for saying it! Every day has been as ten to me, and I travelled all night last night not to lose another day."

They stood a little longer in the fading sunlight, and a few more words were said, unconsidered as words may be when faith is strong and understanding perfect. The difficult word was "good-bye," but it was spoken at last, and George Kirkoswald went homeward over Langbarugh Moor. Genevieve sauntered slowly along the path through the field that was all one mist of green with the springing corn; she was saying to herself softly, yet tremulously:—

"Fain would I dwell on form, fain, fain deny
What I have spoke: but farewell compliment!"

CHAPTER IV.

AT THE RECTORY.

“ The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth
 too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the
 sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard ;
Enough that He heard it once : we shall hear it by-
 and-by.”

BROWNING, *Abt Vogler*.

THE Rectory at Thirkeld Abbas was an old red-brick house, standing in a high-walled garden. Trees drooped over the wall. There were great dark doors at the bottom of the avenue. Inside the doors you came upon a square damp lawn, at the top of which the house stood, tall and narrow, and sombre-looking. The windows were narrow too, and the shabby dark-red curtains gave no

brightness to them. It was just the house where you would expect to find an austere and elderly housekeeper.

The austere housekeeper had in the beginning objected to the residence of Mr. Severne at the Rectory, but Canon Gabriel had set her objections aside with as much firmness as quietness. The coming of the new curate had been the great event of his later life.

Almost at once the young man had stepped into the place of the dead son for whom the Canon had gone softly all the days of so many years. There was a spiritual likeness, none other, but it was strong enough to make the new affection as beautiful as it had been quick of growth.

There had been no upsetting of the old man's way of life. He sat alone during the morning in his own study as he had always done. Mr. Severne's study was in a distant part of the house. In the afternoon, the two went out into the scattered parish, each going his own way. When the day's work was done, they sat together by the fire in the dining-room, a low, dark, unbeautiful room,

that had neither ornament nor picture. The walls were painted stone grey, the curtains were of the same shabby dark red as those in front of the house. There was no other colour that could be called by name.

They sat there as usual one evening—it was the evening of the day on which Mr. Kirkoswald had returned. The curtains had been drawn, two dim candles lighted, a cheerful fire burned in the grate, for it was yet chilly in the evenings, and the Canon bore ill the cold of the northern shire, to which he had never become acclimatized. He had always been a frail man, always sensitive to every physical, mental, and spiritual influence with which he had come in contact.

They had been silent awhile, rather a long while for the curate, the Canon thought, with a touch of amusement. Mr. Severne was not given to silences, rather did he prefer a gentle continuous stream of speech, breaking on this side into light-hearted boyish pleasantries, on that side into grave, earnest, and instant recognition of the purer and holier and more spiritual side of things. He could pass from one to the other so that seeing the mere look

on his face, and in his eyes, you lost all sense of incongruity.

The Canon broke in upon his present thought, whatever it was, with an unwelcome question :—

“Have you read that article in the *Quixotic Review*, Severne? the one entitled ‘To Everything a Season.’”

“No,” said Mr. Severne, lifting his big blue-grey eyes deprecatingly, and blushing deeply; “No—I—I haven’t seen it.”

“What have you seen lately in the way of literature?”

The blush deepened, the confusion mounted and mounted till it reached its height; then it toppled over into a laugh of the keenest amusement.

“I don’t think I’ve seen anything for a long time,” he said; “I—I know I’m too bad; but one has such a lot of things to do, and—and—”

“And as a matter of fact you don’t care for reading?”

Another laugh, with less amusement in it, another blush with more of regret and self-reproach. The Canon had given gentle hints

before, and the curate had made good resolutions ; but, alas ! the instinct, the craving was not there, and until reading became a matter of conscience, there would be no real change. This the Canon had perceived, without being able to understand it. He had been a devourer of books from boyhood himself ; they had been as the very life of his intellectual life, and he valued them accordingly.

“ I suppose it has always been so with you, Ernest ? ” he asked after a time, using, as he often did, the young man’s Christian name.

“ I’m afraid it has. I used to get into trouble about it. At home I get chaffed awfully. My sister Violet tells everybody that I have never read but three books, *Pearson on the Creed*, *The Life of St. Francis de Sales*, and *The Hoosier Schoolmaster*.”

This was told with such innocent gravity that it became the Canon’s turn to laugh. The old man had laughed more during the past few months than he had done from his Oxford days till now. Presently he sent Mr. Severne to his study for the last number of the *Quixotic Review*.

“ I shall begin a course of training,

Severne," he said, when the young man returned. " You shall read to me in the evenings, and I will choose your books, taking care to choose such as must interest you, and then we will talk them over together. The appetite will come so if you will only persevere. . . . Come, now, try to look a little less resigned."

The article in the *Quixotic* which had attracted the Canon's attention had every appearance of having been written to crystallize its author's own opinions. The matter of it was a plea that some thought might be given to the amusements of the people, more especially in remote districts, a subject on which Canon Gabriel had pondered long and often. More than once he had talked it over with Mr. Severne, mentioning, more especially, his desire to do something down in Soulsgrif Bight. But they had sadly concluded that it would be almost impossible to do anything there, since there was not even a barn that could be turned to use. If only a room could be built, a good schoolroom that could be used for other purposes, then something might be possible. This new paper in

the *Quixotic* had given new impetus to the Canon's wish.

"Listen to this, Severne," said the Canon, while the curate hastened to put the candles so that the old man could see better. "It is a passage out of the middle of the paper; the beginning is simply a prose poem."

The Canon began, reading in a pure cultivated tone that would have made almost any article seem of value :—

"Here, for instance, is Gurth—I know him quite well; he lives in the village below—Gurth, the born thrall, dumb, defaced, joyless, but pitiable patient, even in these hard times, when neither the day's work nor the day's wage is always to be had. His gait is heavy, but I fancy his heart is heavier still. 'Merrie England!' I doubt whether he ever so much as heard the phrase. Will his children hear it? How speaks Sir Henry Taylor?—

"Oh, England! "Merry England," styled of yore!"
Where is thy mirth? Thy jocund laughter where?
The sweat of labour on the brow of care
Makes a mute answer—driven from every door!"

"The people actually seem to have forgot-

ten how to amuse themselves,' says a recent writer, and, with Gurth visibly before us, we acknowledge it sadly; but more sadly still we acknowledge that Gurth's master has in nowise forgotten how to amuse himself. What does he ever do, but amuse himself in the most expensive and ornamental manner possible? Is he not acquainted with the Turf, and with Hurlingham? Has he not his opera-box, his yacht, his grouse moor, with perhaps other amusements less defensible than these? At the present moment there are two newspapers of recent date lying before me, and from one I learn that the rented grouse-shootings of Scotland, with the fishings, realise the enormous sum of £300,000 per annum. My other newspaper says, 'It is a fact not undeserving of serious attention, that in the past year the deaths of seventy-seven persons in the Metropolitan district were either due to starvation and exposure, or were at any rate accelerated by privation.'

"I leave these two extracts side by side for the consideration of all whom they may concern. The social ill that weighs upon my mind at present, being not so much the

inability of the working man to keep life in himself, as his inability to make the best of his life when he has it. Is not that Scripture true for him also? ‘To everything there is a season ; and a time to every purpose under the heaven. . . A time to plant ; a time to build. . . A time to laugh ; a time to dance!’ Will it always mean that the time to plant and to build is Gurth’s ; and the time to laugh and to dance his master’s ? I would that his master would think of it.

“There is a good deal of thinking to be done on this head,—hard, earnest, human thinking ; and if any man can bring but the germ of an idea, let him bring it in God’s name. The problems connected with rational recreation for those who most need it are beneath no man’s consideration. Enough has been said in contemptuous description of the pleasures of certain classes. ’Arry, as he displays himself on Bank holidays, presents a sufficiently striking theme for a telling newspaper or magazine article. His yellow shoddy ulster, his magenta neck-tie, his shiny boots are ‘points’ that can hardly escape the meanest observation. We believe in his

devotion to the big earthen bottle; we acquiesce in the opinion that denies him appreciation of any art, science, or literature whatever; but we are bound in the name of humanity to maintain that 'Arry is not the utterly hopeless being that some hold him to be.

"Take what view we will of the classes typified by Gurth and 'Arry, we cannot deny that their mental, moral, and æsthetic condition is at least as much a consequence as a cause—a consequence of bad government, of ignorance in high places, of selfishness, of thoughtlessness, of Cain-like mind among the followers of Christ. 'Am I my brother's keeper?' The question goes up daily and hourly. There are men and women whose whole life of ease and luxury, from the cradle to the grave, is one ceaseless preference of the query. And all the while the brother's blood is crying from the ground in tones and voices that we only acknowledge as sounds that jar upon our exceeding great refinement."

Canon Gabriel stopped here and looked toward his listener, half-expecting to see a

confused endeavour to recall a wandering eye ; but instead, he saw a serious face fixed earnestly on his.

“ That does make one want to do something,” said the young curate thoughtfully. “ But I wish the writer had told one more exactly what was to be done ! ”

“ If you had read the article through, you would have found that the author does become more practical, much more. I have heard it said that every social reformer should have one leading idea. This man’s idea is music ; consequently it agrees with mine. I am certain we can do something—here at Thirkeld Abbas, if not down in the Bight. There is Mrs. Caton, and the two Miss Dammers, and I think Genevieve—Miss Bartholomew—would come and help us.”

“ I’m sure she would,” said Mr. Severne, brightening instantly, and blushing more instantly still. “ She would do anything to help anybody. Shall we go over to-morrow, and ask her ? ”

The Canon looked at him gravely, and rather sorrowfully. Should he utter any word of warning ? Was it too soon ? Was it too

late? The old man had had hope in the beginning; but he had seen enough to turn his hope to fear—fear lest this son of his old age should be called upon to suffer more than he could well bear to see him suffering.

No word of warning was uttered; and next day being temptingly blue and beautiful, the Canon had no special objection to urge when Mr. Severne repeated his proposal that they should go over to Netherbank.

It was almost as much a pleasure to the Canon as it was to the younger man to drive through, between the primrose-banks, to the studio in the orchard, where the trees stood bossed all over with the small round crimson buds; to find when he got there a human being or two unaffectedly glad to see him, grateful to him for going; to know that he might talk, or be silent, or listen, or do aught he chose to do, and yet be sure of coming away refreshed and rested.

The tones of a piano, of Genevieve's voice, arrested them at the cottage door. Mr. Kirkoswald was there in the little room; he had brought down the songs he had promised to bring. Genevieve was trying them over.

"I trust I come as opportunely for you as for myself," said Canon Gabriel, speaking with his beautiful old-fashioned courtesy of manner. Mr. Severne was blushing his greetings. He had been glad to come, and he could not indulge any doubts about the opportuneness of his coming.

The Canon had brought his Review with him. He was an old man; sometimes death came near to him, nearer than anybody knew; and if there was anything to be done, he was always eager that it should be done with as little delay as might be. He drew George Kirkoswald aside, and went right to the heart of the matter that was interesting him so much.

"Meeting you here is better fortune than I had hoped for," Canon Gabriel said. "I wanted to see you, to try to enlist your sympathies. Knowing that you go down to Soulsgrif Bight so often, knowing other things, too, I was sure that you would help if you only saw the matter as I see it, as the writer of this article sees it. It will not be easy to find sympathy for anything that seems so indirectly philanthropic. People will give

money for coals and blankets, as indeed it is right they should, but I doubt if they will look favourably upon a scheme that professes to provide amusement only—amusement for those who have no hereditary right to it."

"It will be a question of time," said Kirkoswald, "time and patient, persevering effort. The people who blame the labouring man for spending his money at the village alehouse, must certainly admit that at present it is too often the sole spot where he has any chance of forgetting his labour, his many cares. If people will only look they will see that his life is one long dull round of unrelieved drudgery, and I think they will hardly refuse to relieve it by so much as you will ask of them."

"You are hopeful?" the Canon said. "I am glad of that. You make me feel more hopeful than I was. . . . I think you said that you had seen this paper in the *Quixotic Review*?"

"Yes," said George Kirkoswald, "I have read it." He could not help glancing at Genevieve as he made the admission. She had the Review in her hand. From the

moment that her eye had fallen upon the open page she had found that every turn of every phrase was for her an expected turn. She gave back a smile for his glance.

“I was wondering how you would answer,” she said.

“You mean to betray me?”

“Assuredly I mean to betray you. Canon Gabriel, this article was written by Mr. Kirkoswald himself. His brain is full of schemes for demoralizing the united parish of Thurkeld Abbas with Soulsgrif Bight.”

The Canon was silent for awhile.

“Then there is little left to be said by me,” he began presently. “Instead of having to plead with you for others, Mr. Kirkoswald, I must plead for myself, that you will give me encouragement in this matter and enlightenment. You can do so much, since you have the experience that Severne has not, and apparently the enterprise that I never had.”

“Thank you. It is easy to be enterprising on paper,” replied Kirkoswald. “But I need hardly say that I am anxious to do what I can. We will at present leave the question

of a suitable room at Soulsgrif. I know a person who has grateful associations with Soulsgrif Bight; and who as a mere expression of his gratitude will see to the room,—with your permission, of course. Our question is what to do with it when we have got it?"

"There could hardly be any limit to the uses of such a room," replied the Canon. "The main plea in this paper is for music, and I am quite in accord with what you say. One thing struck me much—you give it as a quotation—it is the assertion that 'not one person in each million of visitors to the Crystal Palace is charged with drunken and disorderly conduct!' Think of that—not one in a million! Until I read this article I did not dream of counting the Crystal Palace among the great influences that are working on national manners and character. Perhaps if one's eyes were opened, as they will one day be, one would have a reverence for that modern palace of glass and iron, well-nigh equal to the reverence one feels for the ancient stones of Westminster Abbey."

Mr. Bartholomew had come into the room

during this speech, but so gently as not to draw attention from it. He was looking grey and absent and weary. He had been at work; and he had begged his daughter not to interrupt him if visitors came.

“I did not know you were holding a levée, my dear!” he said, turning to Genevieve with a smile in his eyes.

“It is a Chapter,” said Mr. Severne. “We are arranging parish-work.”

“Yes? . . . You were speaking of music. Are you musical, Sir Galahad?”

“N—no; that is, I’m awfully fond of music, but I don’t play—not much.”

“I meant to suggest that Mr. Severne should be conductor,” said George Kirkoswald, “if he will be so kind. The probability is that he will be required to be several things.”

“And your dream of giving concerts is actually threatening fulfilment?” said Mr. Bartholomew. “Well, success to it! But I confess myself unable to see in what exactly the success is to consist.”

“Success for me,” said Kirkoswald, “would consist in knowing that I had turned aside

for one hour the current of thought that was driving to distraction one weary brain. The man might have to go back to his care, to his trouble, but he would not go back the same man. The break in his ideas would certainly have wrought change, if not strength, if not some help diviner still."

"For me," said Genevieve, "success would consist in feeling that by means of music I had spoken of things beyond the power of words to reach or touch, but not beyond the power of the most ignorant *to feel*. It is in that that I think the distinction of music lies, as compared with the other arts. It passes beyond them, so to speak, into regions where they seldom attempt to follow, the regions of unexpressed and inexpressible emotion, of spiritual aspiration. And it is distinct, too, in that it acts so easily and readily upon the uneducated and untrained intellect. A man who cannot read, who cannot even see what your picture is intended to represent, can yet be moved, softened, stirred to a mood not his own by—

'Music that gentlier on the spirit lies
Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes.' "

“ And you, Sir Galahad ? ” asked Bartholomew.

“ I ? Oh, well, I think my idea of success would require some of Miss Bartholomew’s music to express it.”

“ It is beyond the reach of words ? ”

“ No ; but the words are beyond *my* reach.”

“ Are you answered, Bartholomew ? ” asked Canon Gabriel.

“ Not till you have spoken, Canon,” was the reply.

“ If I speak I must speak plainly,” said the old man, a little change coming over his face as he began. “ I must say that I believe the chief success of the attempt must arise out of the opportunity afforded for the acquirement of personal influence over those whom you seek to help and benefit. Organization will be needed ; but organization will not do everything. I am suspicious of all this modern mechanism.

“ Do you think he has no eye to see, no ear to hear, that hard-handed daily labourer ? Do you think your toil-worn artisan has so wrought the heart out of him that he is incapable of experiencing that overmastering

attraction towards a good and great man, a human being, like himself at least in this, in being human? If you do not believe in his capability, then at least wait awhile before you undertake any prominent piece of social reform. Try reform not social, and find the outcome of that. It may surprise you at least as much as it will surprise any one else. I can imagine an element of surprise in the experience of St. Paul, in that of Bernard of Clairvaux, of Whitefield, and John Wesley. Depend upon it that none of these men started from the notion that the world was to be reformed by means of any purely mechanical organization whatever. I fancy that any of these eminent Christians would have agreed on one point at least with the most eminently mischievous agnostic of modern times—John Stuart Mill. I am not sure how far my memory will enable me to quote, but some of you will doubtless remember the general conclusion to which he came in his 'Political Economy,' that the most promising and beneficial schemes for human improvement have mainly failed, and are likely to fail again, from the failure of

those who took part in them to attain the amount of personal virtue imperatively exacted by the very nature of the schemes. So far as these schemes have succeeded in a few solitary instances it has been among a limited number of persons, possessed of more than an ordinary share of the spirit of self-renunciation.

“ The personal virtue ! There, precisely, Mr. Mill, you have named for us the great dynamic force that shall keep the wheels of social reform in most potent and perpetual motion. Provide *that* in sufficient quantity and of adequate quality and you shall do what you will with Gurth, or 'Arry, or any other hopeless individual whatever. Not only shall his time to plant and to build be devoted to the needs of you and yours, but his time to laugh and to dance—if any—shall be delivered over to the passionate ardour of your benevolent will whenever you shall choose to claim it. . . . There, you have my final word as to the nature of the success I would have you aim at, but not my final prayer for its achievement.”

Canon Gabriel went away soon after this,

and Sir Galahad with him. They talked all the way home of the music-room that was going to be built, and of the things that might be done in it another winter.

“Have you any idea who it is that is going to build the room?” asked the curate.

“Yes,” said Canon Gabriel, “I think I have an idea. I think I perceive why a thank-offering is to be put up in Soulsgrif Bight. . . . Have you forgotten the day of the storm?”

CHAPTER V.

A LANDSLIP.

“Antonio
Will keep his promises. If he have once
Declared himself thy friend, he'll care for thee
When thou neglect'st thyself.”

GOETHE, *Torquato Tasso*.

THE April showers had delayed their coming till the beginning of May, then they had come rushing down upon the thirsty leaves and flowers in a sprightly, generous way that made you feel as you watched and listened as if it were your own thirst that was being allayed. You were glad because the hills and the dales were glad.

When the rain had gone there was such a freshness, such a crisp, mossy greenness, that you almost wondered that the world

should have seemed such a beautiful world before. And the sunshine was brighter and clearer ; it seemed to penetrate everywhere, George Kirkoswald thought, as he walked about his shabby rooms at Usselby Hall. He was glad that Genevieve was not there to see them in this fresh, lucent sunshine. It seemed to him that there was an absolute squalor about the place, inclining him toward a new sympathy with wretchedness and misery. "If I lived here long with things in this state I should deteriorate," he said to himself, as he stood watching the early morning sun as it crept across the walls and floor of his dingy library.

But he was not intending to live long with things in this state. Once let that word be spoken that he had to speak, once let that answer be given that he dared to hope would be given, and change should follow speedily.

He had not decided with much detail upon the kind of change, details should be left to another decision than his. He was aware that he would be on one side, the side of beauty for beauty's sake, regardless of higher

or lower considerations ; while Genevieve would be on the other side, the side of a wise renunciation. She would make concessions to him, as she had made concessions to her father, this he knew, but there should be no pressure. In her father's case the pressure had come from her own perception of his inability to work, to think, to live his own life, in the midst of mean and unbeautiful surroundings. When Genevieve was quite a child he had declared that it was necessary to his sense of artistic consistency that his little daughter should be dressed in a manner suited to her own rare beauty, and her dress had always been a matter of more or less interest to him. When he had been commended for his painting of draperies he had frequently asserted that he owed such skill as he had to his daughter's ability to wear her garments gracefully. All this had been before he had suffered ; and suffering had wrought changes ; but Genevieve was aware that his surroundings were still a matter of importance to him. Therefore it was that she had felt herself justified in doing things that

were as congenial to her nature as they were doubtful to her higher judgment.

All this George Kirkoswald knew, and understood and appreciated. He knew, too, that although there had been compromise, there had been no reconciliation ; only a continuous dread of reconciliation to a lower ideal.

It amused him to think that there would be this matter of difference between them. It should never be other than an amusement. He would give up every wish he had rather than cause a sense of strain.

Of course he knew well enough that no serious strain would ever be put upon him. Genevieve was not likely to insist upon ugliness, or meanness, or unseemliness of any kind. The little warfare that was to be would be all delight ; and a cause of opportunities to be anticipated with eagerness.

This was the mood he was in during those bright spring days that followed upon his return from London. He had come back impatient, thirsting for settled knowledge of the future, determined to put an end to the shadow of suspense that now and then

dimmed his present felicity. But, as we have seen, opportunity had not been favourable to him. The coming of Canon Gabriel and Mr. Severne to Netherbank that April afternoon had wrought a more dangerous delay than anybody who knew of it had conceived.

Trusting that fate had thwarted him sufficiently he started for Netherbank once more. It was the crispest and greenest of the days of early May. His own pine woods were blue with hyacinth, everybody's hedges were whitening with the bursting hawthorn buds, spring being at least a month in advance that year, and showering down promises everywhere for the more important autumn.

It was yet early in the afternoon when he reached the thatched cottage, the very smoke from the chimney seeming as if it curled in some special way for him. Strong as he was, and self-contained as he looked, his heart was beating, his eyes alight, his voice not steady when Keturah opened the door, and dashed down his hopes with the information that her master and mistress had

gone out ; adding that they had seemed uncertain as to whether they should go up to the moor or down to the sea.

Kirkoswald reflected a moment. If they had gone upward he must have met them, or seen them in the distance. Then with an impatient good day to Keturah, who stood mischievously smiling, he dashed downward, hardly stopping even to indulge his own thought by the way until he stood by the side of Genevieve Bartholomew on the sands to the north of Soulsgrif Bight.

“ Why did you not leave me a message ? ” he asked with a little tender reproach as they walked up and down where the wavelets were splashing faintly upon the onyx-tinted beach. The sun was sparkling in the water-pools, great dark shadows lay upon the wrack-fringed boulders under the cliffs. Bartholomew was making a little sketch of a fishing-boat that was standing out to sea, a perfect study of colour, with its russet and ochre sails and its rich brown hull. There were sparkling touches of white here and there ; the blue jerseys of the fishermen made effective contrast. The sketch was

only the work of a few minutes, but it was a gem of freshness and clear swift handling.

“And now I must make haste,” the artist said, packing up his tools. “We were going round by the Ness, Genevieve and I,” he added to Kirkoswald; “and up into Birkrigg Gill. You will come with us?”

“That is kind of you,” said Kirkoswald.

“Were you waiting for the invitation?”

“That is unkind; and a little hard to bear. I do assure you I keep a conscience, and it has pricked hard at times.”

“May it never have less to reproach you with!” said Bartholomew heartily. More and more he was assured that his first impression of Kirkoswald had been a true one; that it had failed only on the side of inadequate appreciation. He could not but admire the strength that he had never had himself, the quick clear vitality that was the outcome of that strength, and seemed to make all life, the social life, the life of thought, the life of work, so easy, so painless, so natural. He was already beginning to feel that he might some day come to lean

on this man as a father leans on the son who has gone beyond himself, and stands on a higher plane in men's estimate. The feeling had comfort in it when he thought of his future, more comfort still when he thought of the future of his daughter.

They had left the sea-shore now and were making their way up the noisy rippling beck to the upper part of the Gill. Mr. Bartholomew was going out on the other side to the place where he had sat on the day when Cecil Richmond had joined him. He had never liked to think of that day much. He was conscious of something that impressed him with an air as if of mystery; an under-current that he could neither define nor understand. He did not indulge the feeling, but it did not on that account fail to come back again and again. It had come back now; but he pressed onward to his work. He had given his word; and it would be easier to keep it than to break it, considering circumstances all round.

Genevieve and Kirkoswald sat by him for a time; and they saw that he was working slowly, dubiously.

"Don't try any longer, father; since you are not in the mood," Genevieve begged tenderly.

"I must try, dear; since Nature's mood happens to be such a very glorious one."

"It is glorious!" said Kirkoswald; "and I was just thinking that I should like to show Miss Bartholomew something more of the gloriousness of Birkrigg Gill, that is if we may leave you for a little while. There is a favourite spot of mine a little higher up the ravine, a spot where I used to come when I was a boy to get the wild cherries. . . . You are not too tired?" he asked of Genevieve as they turned to go.

It was hardly possible to be tired on such a day, in such an hour. There are moments of life when people seem lifted above the possibility of physical pain, sometimes above mental pain too if it lie quite apart from the exaltation of the moment. For that time it is another existence that one lives. The gates of another world are set open, one enters in, and the doors are shut upon the old world, the world of doubt and care, of suffering and humiliation.

Genevieve and George Kirkoswald entered in by an arching avenue of misty trees, misty with buds and plumes, with tufts and tassels ; with the green leaves of the young sycamore, and the golden-brown of the bursting oak-boughs. The true glory of the Gill just then was the white and the pink-white blossoms of the wild fruit-trees for which the place was famed. The clusters of bloom were on the wild cherry ; the great crab apple-trees threw long pink-blossomed sprays up against the blue heavens, backward against the dark brown rock, forward over the flower-decked pathway. Giant primroses were nestling in corners among the deep under-growth ; fragile wood anemones were looking up with the touch of wistfulness that they always seem to have. A little reed-sparrow was twittering and singing on a spray ; there was a woodlark on the top of a hawthorn-tree ; a thrush was singing his bridal song ; far away, up among the hills, the cuckoo was calling, calling, never weary of calling to the spring.

They walked on hand-in-hand, and silently, these two ; on through the Eden of white wild flowers and blossoming trees.

Why should it not be silently? The question did not form itself in the brain of either, but it was there unformed, and vaguely influencing to silence. Everything moved to that; to utter stillness, utter rest, utter peace.

In moments of supremest emotion words are always inadequate, and being inadequate they jar and detract. The highest feeling demands that we leave it unexpressed.

It was enough for Genevieve that her hand was in George Kirkoswald's, that he held it there as one who had a right to hold it for ever. There was a strength, a completeness in his grasp that was of itself a sufficient promise.

Promise! She would have scorned herself had any thought within her demanded a spoken promise of him.

And as for George Kirkoswald, he too would have known self-scorn if, with that small hand lying confidingly in his, he could have had a doubt, a dread, a feeling of uncertainty.

The rocks on either hand were higher and more rugged as they went on. The hanging

greenery was flung about more luxuriantly ; the undergrowth was deeper and more tangled. Yet still the primroses and the wood-anemones clustered among the grass ; still the cherry and the wild apple trees were there. Aloft, growing out of a great moss-grown boulder that was cleft almost in twain, was a silver birch swinging its feathery boughs in the air.

They stood awhile ; wondering how the bare riven rock could nourish so graceful and grateful a thing. There was a tiny streamlet trickling down by the side of it ; making the ground moist enough for the water-buttercup to grow. It was a quite silent little stream. The only sound to be heard was the twittering of the reed-sparrow ; the cuckoo far away, calling, calling, never weary of calling to the spring.

Another sound broke upon the stillness presently. It was George Kirkoswald's voice, a manly voice subdued with a woman's tenderness. "Do you know that I am all but twice your age, my child ?" he asked, looking with serious look into the perfect face beside him. A pink flush answered him even

as he spoke. Yet Genevieve made other answer.

“Yes, I know it,” she said, lifting her dark beautiful eyes to his.

“How long have you known it?”

“Always—always since I have known you.”

“And it does not—it makes no difference to you?”

“Yes; it makes a difference,” the girl said. She was answering quite quietly, with a certain strength that came of natural straightforwardness, of absence of coquetry, of rare simplicity of soul. “Yes: it makes a difference. I am glad always that you are older.”

“Tell me why, Genevieve?”

The girl looked up again with a quick, happy light in her eyes, and a deeper glow almost flashing into her face.

“I *have* wanted to hear you say that!” she said with childlike eagerness, childlike guilelessness.

“I have said it many times. It is so beautiful, so like music, I could not help saying it. . . . I may always say it now?”

“ Yes ; you may say it always.”

Was that some heavy footstep coming crashing down among the undergrowth on the rocks above ? It seemed as if the very stones and the stems of the trees were cracking and rending asunder. George Kirkoswald started, looked upward just in time, just in time to save the life of Genevieve Bartholomew once again ; perhaps, indeed, his own life also.

Genevieve had not understood—there had been no time to understand. She had only heard the riving, snapping, craunching sounds ; she had only felt, as it were, the shiver of the earth, then, even while a strong arm was clasping her, almost flinging her outward from the path, there came the thunderous thud of fallen rock. Where she had stood with her hand in George Kirkoswald’s one moment before, the nearer half of the cleft boulder was lying, with the silver birch, right across the path.

All manner of things had fallen, dragged downward with the rock and with the tree. A great briar had caught Genevieve’s hat, swept it from her head : it was lying crushed.

under the mass of stone. All the shower of her yellow silken hair was about her as she lay unconsciously with her head on George Kirkoswald's shoulder, his arm supporting her, his first kiss upon her lips.

“Genevieve, Genevieve, my darling!” he said hoarsely, passionately. “My child, speak to me!” He was as pale as the girl herself. Could any piece of falling stone have touched her, that she should lie there so stirless, so lifeless, so pallid, so strange?

He stroked the long rippling silken hair; he put the small pale hand to his warm lips; he called again, and yet again, “Genevieve, Genevieve, my child, speak to me!”

There was no answer, no sound save the chirp of the little reed-sparrow, twittering in the fallen birch.

George Kirkoswald went on uttering his distress, his anguish, in broken words, in passionate cries; it seemed impossible that she should lie there with the spring sunshine turning her yellow hair to glittering gold, with birds chirping all about, with pink-white blossoms fluttering down over her dress, with the white wood-sorrel and the blue speedwell

at her feet—it seemed impossible in the midst of all this life that this most living of created beings should not have life enough left to hear life's most thrilling and precious words.

“Genevieve, Genevieve, my child, speak one word; if you love me speak one word!”

Only a few minutes had passed, a very few, yet it seemed as if an hour had gone by when the first pale pink tint was discernible on the white lip and cheek. Then the wondering eyes unclosed. Fuller consciousness brought the quick deep blush of maiden shame, for which there seemed to be a thousand reasons.

“Tell me first that you are not hurt in any way?” said Kirkoswald with concern.

“I am not hurt at all,” Genevieve replied; “and it was cowardly to be so much startled.”

She was trying, as she stood there, still blushing deeply, to gather up and coil the rich thick shower of gold that the breeze was beginning to stir; but it was not easy. George Kirkoswald saw that her hands were tremulous, that she had to make effort.

“Let me help you,” he said, taking the

heavy coil from her hands and twining it with gentle care. He was looking at it, wondering at its beauty ; he was not looking down the path, he was not observing a tall, stately figure coming toward them in a sweeping dress of dark red silk.

Diana Richmond was observing him. She had plenty of time to do so as she came noiselessly over the soft turf.

It was Genevieve Bartholomew who saw her first. Genevieve was turning to thank George for the small service he had done. She saw at once that the doing of it had been witnessed by Miss Richmond.

The girl turned pale, very pale, as if the thing had been a crime ; and a change came over the face of George as he moved onward by her side. They must meet Miss Richmond ; they must pass quite close.

She was looking at them steadily. There was no smile on her face, no change ; there was nothing that could be read or comprehended ; at any rate there was nothing that Genevieve could comprehend.

Miss Richmond came nearer, looking from under her half-closed eyes as she usually did

look. Her mouth was lightly compressed, as it always was. She looked very beautiful, very majestic. She passed with a stately bow.

There was nothing more than that—a stately bow of recognition.

A sense of wonder was mingled with the relief that George Kirkoswald and Genevieve felt as they went back down the Gill. They went as they had come, quite silently.

All the way back they kept silence, back through the Eden of white wild flowers and blossoming trees. There was a slight ascent just before they came to the gate that led out to the thymy bank where Noel Bartholomew sat sketching. The pathway was in the shade of some great trees whose trunks were covered with ancient ivy. George Kirkoswald stopped and took Genevieve's hand in his again. It was trembling still, and his own was less steady than usual.

“ You will say one word to me, my child ? ” he asked in a low, pleading tone. “ Just one word—say that you are mine ! ”

Genevieve lifted her face to his, frankly, readily, yet with a beautiful solemnness dawn-

ing there. "I am yours always," she said ;
"I am yours till I die."

And still the reed-sparrow went on twittering in the bough ; still the cuckoo went on calling in the distance, calling, calling, never weary of calling to the spring.

CHAPTER VI.

WAITING.

“ And sometimes I am hopeful as the spring,
And up my fluttering heart is borne aloft,
As high and gladsome as the lark at sunrise;
And then, as though the fowler’s shaft had pierced it,
It comes plumb down with such a dead, dead fall.”

Philip Van Artevelde.

WAITING, when there is no doubt, no suspense, is often a very happy attitude of mind. The mere fact that there is something worth waiting for precludes all idea of dulness, or heaviness, or emptiness of life.

Genevieve sat in the little coral-tinted room; she had arranged it all with her own hands that morning, turning her plants to the sun, and giving them water. Then she had gone out to the hedgerows down the fields, and had brought in all manner of

beautiful wild things to deck the place. Long trailing sprays of greenery hung down from the brackets, and quivered in the breeze from the open windows. The canary chirped in his cage; the pigeons perched upon the window-sill, and plumed themselves in the morning sun.

All the forenoon Genevieve waited. It was Tuesday, the day after the landslip in Birkrigg Gill. George Kirkoswald was so sure to come that Genevieve never said to herself she was sure. She had only to wait a little, to wait in an untroubled rapture so keen, so unspeakable, as to lie on the very verge of pain. Perhaps it would be a little less keen, a little less tremulous after she had seen him again.

It could not be but that some sense of confusion, something that was near to shame, should mingle with her rapture. And this she bore ill, it was so new, so unprecedented in her mental life.

It was impossible as she sat there that she should not go back over the events of the day before. They had made the great grand crisis of her existence. The thing that had

given life to her life could not happen twice over.

It had all happened in a moment as it were; and so strangely—so very strangely! No wonder that there should be an element of pain in the beauty and rapture of it.

Perhaps the most beautiful moment of all had been that moment when they had stood hand in hand in that Eden of pale wild flowers and blossoming trees; and when George had spoken her name in such tender, gentle tones. “Tell me why, Genevieve?” he had asked. Certainly that was sweeter to remember than all else beside.

She did not linger upon the sudden shock that followed, clashing upon the nerve currents of her frame with such disastrous force. It had been a very natural and not uncommon occurrence, so her father had said. The earth had been loosened by the previous rains, and it had given way all about the overhanging rock. Such things were always happening in these ravines.

The rest was not all pleasant to remember. A hot blush dyed her face each time she recollected the unexpected appearance of

Diana Richmond upon the scene. What could she think, since she had known nothing of the events of the few previous moments? It would be so difficult to make explanations to Miss Richmond. "But I will explain," the girl said to herself, "I will tell her all the truth, if I can, when I see her again."

All that happened after was tinged with this confusion that had the effect of doubt and self-reproach. Surely that last word of hers, "I am yours always, I am yours till I die," had been spoken too soon, too readily. There had been no pleading, no effort needed to win from her a confession of love. She had yielded at once, without one moment of reservation. This was not well, it was not well. Even the child-heroine of "The Swan's Nest" had known that things should not be thus.

"The *third* time, I may bend
From my pride and answer,—Pardon—
If he comes to take my love."

So the morning passed, and so the afternoon passed. When the evening came there was a little wonder, a little quietness. Noel Bartholomew had been at work in his studio

all day, but it had not been a successful day ; and at the last moment, in a fit of disgust, he had painted out the work of many days, knowing as he did it that he would afterward repent.

Once, only a week or so before the landslip, he had made a discovery that had caused him to sit in his studio for nearly two hours without moving.

It has already been intimated that Bartholomew was not a provident man ; and the manner of his life had not been of a nature to encourage providence. Almost all that he knew about his own affairs was that he had always had enough for his own needs and the needs of those about him.

Before leaving London, before deciding to give up his house, and sell the larger part of his household goods, he had been compelled to face the fact that his three years of inactivity had told upon his resources. All the time he had been living exactly as he had lived when his productive powers were greatest. There had been a certain slight unpleasant shock, a determination to retrench, and finally a conviction that retrenchment

was not possible in the neighbourhood of Kensington. So it will be seen that he had a double motive for choosing to retire to Murk-Marishes for a time, and for endeavouring to settle down there on a system of living that should cause him as little anxiety as possible.

Of all this Genevieve had known nothing certainly; but she had guessed enough to make her mindful of the money which she had to expend herself, either on dress, or for household needs. In point of fact her dress had cost her nothing since she left London; and she intended that for some time to come her personal expenses should be a matter of extreme care. More than once she remembered little hints of foreboding that had dropped from her mother's lips.

The discovery that Bartholomew had just made would have startled his daughter more seriously than the falling of half the rocks in the neighbourhood. To put the matter briefly and plainly, he knew as he sat there brooding over the papers in his desk, and the book in his hand, that unless he made some special effort, the end of a very short time would find him penniless.

The word crossed his mind, bringing with it a sense of absurdity for the moment. The pictures that hung about his studio would, if they were finished, bring money enough for the needs of years.

They were not finished, but it seemed to him, as he sat looking at them, that nothing could be easier than to finish two of them within two months.

It seemed so easy a matter, and so plain, that he turned away with a smile ; and stirring his studio fire into a blaze he sat there with his chill hands extended, thinking gratefully of the work he had done since he came to Netherbank. He had been dissatisfied with it, both with its quantity and its quality. But if it had not been done, what would have been his outlook now ? He hardly cared to think of that ; indeed, he hardly cared to think of the matter any more at all. Once he had decided what was to be done there was no need to harass himself uselessly.

He did not seem to harass himself. He was not conscious of brooding over his financial difficulties. But what was it that had suddenly come upon his too sensitive

brain, pressing there like a band of iron, and seldom relaxing its dread pressure? It was never relaxed entirely, save when he was out under the blue heavens where the wind from the sea could breathe upon his fevered forehead.

The blow had fallen just when he was most ill-prepared to bear such a blow. For weeks before he had been flagging, needing rest; yet he had worked eagerly when the mood was upon him, using up the little nerve force he had at the moment instead of letting it accumulate a while. He was still doing the same thing, or trying to do it, even though the new pressure on his brain made his own work seem hateful in his sight. It need hardly be said that his suffering under these circumstances was very great, yet he bore it patiently, and in silence.

Still it was not to be expected that he could pass through such an experience as this without arousing some suspicion in the mind of one who watched him so closely as his daughter watched him. She was conscious of some new element in his suffering; and the new element seemed more than ever

patent on this bright May afternoon, when he came up from the studio to the little sitting-room where Genevieve was waiting. He had just painted out the beautiful and highly wrought background which he had put to the Sir Galahad ; and even as the brush had swept over the canvas repentance had touched him. But it was too late ; the under-tints had only been half-dry, and the confusion was hopeless.

In the morning Genevieve had looked forward to this one hour of the afternoon. George Kirkoswald would be there when her father came up from his work ; and it would be then that George would speak, that he would say how much more had happened in Birkrigg Gill than the fall of a piece of rock. Genevieve had hesitated to speak of all that had passed herself. How could she speak of it ? How should she say the words ? She had thought of it, tried to think how she might bring herself to speak ; but her thought had ended in passionate tears for the dead, loving-mother to whom it would have been so easy to speak and so natural.

But George had not come. Some un-

expected thing had detained him doubtless ; and she must go out of doors with her father now. He was restless, nervous.

“ I must go down to the sea this evening, dear,” he said. “ Nothing will give me any strength or any calmness but the sea.”

Genevieve was careful to leave a message this time, but it was left in vain.

It was quite in vain too that she watched with eager eyes the road that led down between the rocks into Soulsgrif Bight. No strong tall figure came dashing down with a tender reproach on his lips this evening.

And the next day was as that day had been, only a little quieter. “ It will be my turn to utter reproaches,” Genevieve said to herself as she sat down to sing over again the songs she had been asked to sing so often. One of these was *Robin Adair*, and Genevieve felt that she sang it with a better understanding than before ; a finer feeling for its yearning and its pathos. She would sing it again to-morrow when George Kirkoswald came.

But the morrow came, and Genevieve did not sing *Robin Adair*. She did not open the

piano at all. She wanted to listen, to listen for a footstep on the path through the springing barley.

All day she listened, hardly caring to go down to the studio lest she should miss one moment of reassurance. Then she blamed herself and went. "What was she thinking? What was she fearing?" she asked herself in scorn. What did it matter, to-day, or to-morrow, this week or the next week? What did it matter that she should have to wait a little?

So she went on waiting, and the week went on to its close, quietly, but not painlessly. Her father's ceaseless questioning and wondering as to what could have become of Kirkoswald was enough for pain. Once he said he would go up to Usselby to make inquiries, but Genevieve dissuaded him from going to Usselby. Not for the world would she have him go there unless she knew that George was ill, and unable to come to Netherbank. Of course, she had distressed herself, thinking that he might be ill; but in that case he would have sent some note or message.

Every morning there had been new flowers

in the little room ; every morning new sun-shine ; every morning new hopes.

And every evening the sun had gone down ; and every evening the flowers had drooped. Had the hopes drooped a little also ?

Genevieve never admitted that they had. If her faith would not bear so slight a strain as this, then certainly some heavier strain would be laid upon it, so that it might grow to a stronger power of endurance.

CHAPTER VII.

RETROSPECT.

“But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
The fowler’s pipe, and follows to the snare—
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind !
Some women do so.”

R. BROWNING.

It need hardly be said that for George Kirkoswald also the scene in Birkrigg Gill had repeated itself many times.

All the night that followed upon that eventful day it seemed to him that he was passing from an extreme of agony to an extreme of bliss. If he slept he held a lifeless form that kept silence, though he cried his most passionate cry. When he awoke life came back to the dead, pale lips, and

they parted, saying with a sweet solemnity, "I am yours, I am yours always till I die."

He was glad when the morning came. He rose early, as he always did, and went out into the fir-copse, where the sun was slanting upward from the sea. He was glad, and the morning air was glad, and the birds that sang in the branches were glad.

This thing that was in all his thoughts had not happened as he had always meant it to happen. There had not been the unburdening of his mind that he had intended there should be. Genevieve had been too much unstrung to listen to him then, even if the presence of Miss Richmond in the Gill had not put an end to the opportunity.

He had acted on an impulse when he had asked for a word of promise in that unlikely moment; but he was glad now that he had asked, glad to the last fibre of his being. The promise had been given, and nothing could destroy the happiness that had entered into him by the gift.

The few hours that must elapse before he could present himself at Netherbank seemed like so many days. There was not that

patience in his waiting that there had been in the waiting of Genevieve.

It was not that he had any dread now. The worst thing he anticipated was that he should have to consent to a long engagement. Noel Bartholomew would not be anxious to part with his daughter. It seemed like a bitter cruelty to ask him to part with her at all. But George had his own plans for mitigating the cruelty. The painter might live where he chose to live, but he should always be made to feel that his real home was under his daughter's roof. A handsome studio was part of Kirkoswald's idea for the restoration of Usselby; and it was an intention that even Genevieve might not gainsay.

So George was thinking as he wandered back to his lonely breakfast. He had an intense dislike to lonely meals, and it had been growing upon him of late. Even the idea that they might soon be no longer lonely was not very comforting for the present hour. He was sorely needing some one to whom he might speak out of his full heart without reserve.

For one second he thought that his need

was about to be met, but the next instant disclosed the fact that the man who was entering his grounds by the wicket gate on the north wore the Richmond livery. He came forward, touched his hat respectfully, delivered a note to the master of Usselby, and retired.

Perhaps it would be more correct to say a letter than a note. The envelope was large, and appeared to be well filled. The address was in Miss Richmond's clear, firm, important-looking handwriting.

George Kirkoswald went indoors at once. His breakfast was ready, it was waiting for him in his study; but he hardly saw it. He sat down on a chair near the window and placed the unopened letter on a table before him.

It would perhaps hardly be an exaggeration to say that so far as the appearance of his face was an index, ten minutes had done the work of ten years.

He sat there, looking out beyond the letter to some far-away vacancy that his narrow room could not bound. His forehead was drawn into rugged lines, his dark

eyes had sunk into deeper recesses, his firm mouth was compressed with something more than firmness.

He did not think as he sat there. For as long a time as was possible to him he purposely refrained from thinking.

It never occurred to him to say to himself, "I will learn the worst at once; even the worst may not be so bad as I fear."

Nothing occurred to him that had any gleam of hope in it. When he could begin to look about for hope the worst would be over; and it had not burst upon him in all its strength yet. This he knew, but he was not trying to prepare himself.

The first sign of returning vitality was a desire to look fully into the nature of his past mistake, the one great mistake of his life.

He must face the consequence; but before he could decide how best to face it he had a great wish to see clearly the extent of his wrong-doing.

He had seen it before, but now that he was farther away from it he thought he could see it under an altered light. Things would

seem different, and differently seen they might be differently judged.

Some who had known of his mistake had made excuse for him by saying that he was little more than a boy when he made it. This was an error. Kirkoswald had been twenty-seven years of age when he had yielded to the strange, wild, intoxicating passion that Diana Richmond had inspired in him.

It had come upon him with a suddenness, an absoluteness that seemed to turn the whole current of his being aside from its true course. He had used no judgment, nor desired to use any.

He had had no acquaintance whatever with Miss Richmond in his boyish days, though they had been neighbours, so to speak, and of the same age within a year or two, Miss Richmond having the advantage. Kirkoswald had been educated mainly abroad, and even while he was at Oxford he had seldom spent his vacations at Usselby.

Soon after taking his degree he had gone abroad again, and had remained there till the summer of his twenty-seventh year. Three weeks after his return his engagement

to Miss Richmond had been proclaimed with a curious haste and publicity. Half the Riding wondered over the unlikely match.

Of course it could be understood. Miss Richmond's marvellous beauty, and her still more marvellous powers of fascination, were acknowledged everywhere. But then everywhere also was it acknowledged that Kirkoswald was a man of wide culture, of scholarly ways of thought, of a poetic appreciation of life and nature. Did he expect that Miss Richmond would be a helpmeet for him here? Was he anticipating that refined intellectual intercourse which he had declared in one of his published poems to be the only true basis for any bond of friendship or of love?

Others asked these questions before he began to ask them for himself. When they came he thrust them away; again and again he thrust them away, but again and again they claimed loudly to be heard.

He was enduring it all over again as he sat there with the unopened letter before him. The very handwriting seemed to bring back that first dawning dread, that first fear lest he should have mistaken the enthralment

of his senses for the strong, fine, spiritual bond that alone can bind two souls so that neither shall stumble in the dark ways of life for the need of that support that such bonds engage to give.

There had been a long period of suffering and dismay that he had not been able to understand at the time. It had succeeded, by somewhat quick gradations, to the first phase of wild and passionate admiration. Even now he barely comprehended it. Day after day for a whole year had been marked as it went past by pain, by negation, by unsatisfied yearnings. In his ignorance, in his infatuation he had imagined that it was a fuller love for which he yearned, not knowing, not perceiving that Miss Richmond's feeling for him was not love at all; not dreaming that his devotion did but satisfy her vanity, and help a little to dull her craving for excitement. She professed to return his love, but her professions failed to content him. They were hollow and they were lifeless, and there came to be a hollowness and a lifelessness about all their intercourse that half maddened him for a time.

He had, of course, desired in the beginning that their marriage should take place as soon as it conveniently could, but the sudden and serious illness of Mrs. Richmond had caused delay. This was fatal. Subsequently, in a way that was curious to look back upon, the question of marriage had been allowed to subside. It had subsided by tacit, mutual consent. That was all that could be said. The engagement remained a fact, but the question of its fulfilment was consciously held in abeyance.

When at last he ceased to demand more from Miss Richmond's affection than she had to give, he found to his bitter cost that there was little else he might demand. Large as his nature was, and wide his acquirement, he failed to interest her unless he sought to do so through her vanity. In no other way could he touch her to any quickness of response, save by compliment, and the use of varied skill in flattery. No literature, no art, no science, no philosophy, could arouse her to desire to share for an hour in the intellectual life that was to him above all other life. He strove manfully enough to turn

the current of such mental power as she had, believing all the while that the power was there if it could only be awakened, arrested, fixed on any sufficient and worthy ideas. But the sole result was an ever-increasing disappointment, an ever-growing strain and tension, a never-ceasing dread of a life of jarring and fretfulness, such as could not fail to be if he were for ever to go on desiring to live the higher life by the side of a woman whose higher nature seemed dead within her, so dead that even love had failed to evoke one sign of intellectual vitality, of spiritual susceptibility.

Strong as George Kirkoswald was, his strength did not enable him to bear this strain with impunity. His health failed, and depression came upon him. He was relieved, though ashamed of his relief to the very core of him, when a medical friend in London all but insisted that he should not spend the winter of that year in England.

He was surprised when the moment of parting came. Diana Richmond was all tenderness, and her manner full of a vague repentance and regret. He would have

changed his plans, even at the last, if his word had not been given to his friend somewhat solemnly.

A still greater surprise was in store for him. He was not prepared for the long and passionately-worded letters that came to him so frequently and regularly from the Yorkshire hills. They awoke all the old passion in him. Had he been a fool? he asked himself; had he been blind? or was it simply that he had been *exigeant*, and unreasonable in his expectations?

He came back again. The old experience awaited him. There was another brief season of delirium, another chance of marriage hindered by events, another long, long period of doubt and pain, and final disillusionment.

This was the end. There had been no other end.

There had been no quarrel. Once, after a long interval of absence and silence, George Kirkoswald had written a note to Miss Richmond. He had been for some two or three months in London, and no correspondence had passed, the previous intercourse between them having been of too cold and restricted

a nature to make renewed correspondence seem needful or desirable. The engagement had not yet been broken, but it had worn down, fragment by fragment, until in his eyes it no longer existed.

George Kirkoswald was about to accompany two friends of his to Rome; his stay might be protracted, and before he went he had a very natural desire to feel himself perfectly free, to know that no further allegiance was expected from him. So it was that he wrote, briefly and courteously, to Miss Richmond, asking only one thing at her hands, that she would return his letters.

But Miss Richmond did not return his letters, nor did she make any reply to that last request.

From that day to this—an interval of some four years — nothing further had passed between Diana Richmond and Kirkoswald. It had so happened that they had not even met face to face until they had met in Birk-rigg Gill, George Kirkoswald with Genevieve Bartholomew's golden hair in his hands.

Was it strange, then, that he should sit looking at this unopened letter with pain and

dark dread graven on every feature of his face ?

It was a noble face, even then, though there was written on it the knowledge of error and mistake, the consciousness that in that bygone day he had not been true to the higher light that was in him ; how untrue he had been he only saw now that he sat there looking backward over the things that had been, with other eyes than his own, the eyes of the purer soul that was blending with his in its very highest aspirations.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ UPON A TRANCED SUMMER NIGHT.”

“ We cannot kindle when we will
The fire that in the heart resides,
The spirit bloweth and is still,
In mystery our soul abides ;—
But tasks, in hours of insight willed,
Can be through hours of gloom fulfilled.”

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

Not till the noon-day sun shone in upon his stricken face did George Kirkoswald break the seal of the letter Miss Richmond had written to him in the middle of the previous night.

It was a long letter, and he read it through to the end, his lips growing white as he read, his face turning to a more ashen grey.

There is no need that it should be given in its entirety here. Every page was character-

istic of the writer, of her shallow and uncharitable judgment, of her self-centered life and aim, of the strange forcefulness of her undisciplined mind.

“ You are as much my affianced husband to-day as you were on that day,” wrote Miss Richmond; “ as much as you were when you were moved to write those numerous and passionate letters, entreating me to consent to a speedy marriage. Since seeing you in Birkrigg Gill to-day I have read every letter that you ever wrote to me. Have you forgotten them? If you have forgotten, I will send you copies of a few of them, a few of those you wrote when we were first engaged. Romeo himself had not used a more passionate warmth of expression, nor had he professed an intenser adoration, or sworn a more eternal fidelity. Can it be that you have forgotten? If it should be so, be sure that you shall be reminded, be very sure that you shall not long plead forgetfulness. If you drive me to desperation, believe that I can be desperate. You will learn what a forsaken woman is capable of doing. *Some one else shall learn it also.* Will that suffice? Do I need to

threaten more plainly ? I write for the purpose of threatening, of threatening you with the worst, with the most public exposure of your letters and conduct that I can obtain. You know how the world will receive it, the world that believes in you so much, that has such faith in your chivalrous sense of honour. I heard a gentleman saying only the other day that if any man could be said to ‘wear the white flower of a blameless life ’ that man was George Kirkoswald. To this gentleman I shall turn for the help that I shall need if you drive me to seek for redress.”

There was more than this, much more, but it was all to the same specious purpose. Reproaches, threatenings, were mingled with distorted facts, while other facts were utterly ignored.

The difficult thing was to find a motive for all this evil will, this most evident desire to work mischief and misery.

Not for one moment did George Kirkoswald deceive himself, or pain himself by fearing that any grain of unrequited love had remained in that ungenial soil to spring up and bear such bitter fruit as this.

If there was no love, then neither could there be jealousy, so he argued, forgetting that there is another jealousy—

“ Dead love’s harsh heir, jealous pride ; ”

forgetting, too, that a nature like Diana Richmond’s, full of all contradictory passions and thoughts and emotions, was not a nature to be judged by any ordinary ways of judgment.

He could not find any motive that seemed to him strong enough, but he came near to finding one when he remembered the conflict that had always existed in her by reason of her unoccupied life, and the intensity of her ceaseless demand that life should not only be interesting, but that it should be dramatically interesting ; and the demand included insistently that the interest should centre in herself.

Once—it was when he had first discovered for himself the existence of this conflict—he had asked her why it was that she should choose to remain always, or nearly always, on a bleak Yorkshire upland ; when she might, now and then at least, find interest

and occupation in foreign travel. Her reply had amazed him.

"I have no wish to travel," Miss Richmond had said, "I have never had any wish to see any foreign country, or any foreign person. The mere idea is distasteful to me. I have no interest whatever in anything out of England. You say I can choose. I cannot. If I could I would live in London. I would never leave London except to go to some watering-place for a few weeks in the summer."

He could remember distinctly how she had looked when she said that. The expression on her beautiful face had disclosed an intense longing for fuller life, human life that should act and react all about her in concentric circles that turned always upon herself. Life at Yarrell Croft must have been something like martyrdom to such a woman. No wonder that when opportunity came she should instinctively seek to make the most of it—the most, though that also meant the worst.

Opportunity had come now, a wide and vast opportunity that doubtless promised to

Diana Richmond an almost endless series of reliefs from the tedious monotony of her existence at Yarrell Croft.

The first thing that she would expect would be a visit from George Kirkoswald himself—a visit that would be made to resolve itself into a passionate scene. All the old, dead, hateful passages of his existence would be torn up again, brought to a ghastly and galvanized life, divested of the glamour and the circumstance that had enabled him to live them out without detecting all their hatefulness. Diana herself would play a more picturesque part, and one more entirely suited to her nature. Doubtless even now she was rehearsing it, studying the most effective attitudes the situation would afford.

And the end—what would the end be?

Here again George Kirkoswald did not deceive himself—knowledge left him no room for self-deception.

The end would be inexorableness, ruthless impassibility, triumphant defiance.

As far as he might he would spare himself here, since self-sacrifice in this instance would be of no avail.

If by going to Yarrell Croft, if by throwing himself at the feet of Diana Richmond in a very passion of self-abnegation he could have induced her to spare, not *his* peace of mind, not *his* happiness, but the happiness of another, then the sun had not set upon his despair as it was setting.

For the time being it was despair—the kind of despair that comes so sharply upon a man who has held by a high code of honour, and finds himself enmeshed in circumstance that gives colour to accusations of dishonour.

As Diana Richmond knew only too well, the possession of a stainless name was to George Kirkoswald above all other possessions. His over-scrupulousness had served her for an amusement; his antiquated views had been burdensome when they had been comprehensible. It was this knowledge that had enabled her to strike with so sure an aim; this insight that made her feel so secure in the position she had taken.

Let him do what he would he could not act, as doubtless he would have done if that letter of hers had never been written.

It is possible that even Miss Richmond

might have been satisfied if she could have sounded the full depth of the anguish she had wrought—satisfied, but not touched. No sight of another's sorrow could rouse her to sympathy with that sorrow. That he had found long ago. Anything like a persistent claim upon her sympathy seemed to harden her nature utterly against the person who preferred the claim, and as a rule the hardness resolved itself into anger and annoyance.

It was this knowledge that each had of the other that lent so keen an emphasis to that written page.

More than once during the day George Kirkoswald had risen to his feet and paced the room in a very passion of rebellion against the torture he was undergoing. No note of resignation had been struck within him yet. The first effect of the sudden and strong disappointment had been bewilderment. To this succeeded anger, resentment, a wild desire to meet defiance with defiance.

Why should he not tear that letter into a thousand shreds, go down to Netherbank on the next morning, and act and speak there as

he would most certainly have acted and spoken had he not received it?

This was the one strong inclination that he had. Later there came a day when he wished with all his might that he had acted upon his inclination.

Had he known less of Diana Richmond, had he been less strongly persuaded of her infinite cruelty, he had doubtless done this thing that he desired to do. As it was he was overcome of the persuasion.

It was not that he dreaded her cruelty for himself; but he did dread to feel it falling through him upon another—another whose face in all its pure, spiritual loveliness came before him now as the face of an accusing angel. . . . What had he done?

What had he done? And what could now be done? In his perplexity he got up and left his house hardly knowing that he left it. It was a moonless night; a dark, clear, blue night with silver stars shining in their places as if they reigned only over a world of utter calmness, utter peace. There was no sound to break the solemn stillness. The fir-trees stood still, the birds were still; the far-off sea

was murmuring at the foot of the cliffs as if it desired to subdue itself to the wide harmony of the night.

It was a long time before any sense of this harmony wrought itself a way into George Kirkoswald's soul. He walked about his ill-kept grounds and out on to the moor with the cool night air upon his forehead; but his brain throbbed on under the ceaseless questioning to which it could find no answer.

What had he done? And what might now be done? Could he do this thing that seemed as if it were the only thing left for him to do? Could he go down when the morning sunshine came to the peaceful little cottage in the corn-field and say—say to Genevieve Bartholomew—

“ You have promised to be mine, and I desire passionately that you will keep your promise. But another woman counts me her affianced husband, and has a thousand proofs that she does not do so without due reason? ”

Could he add to this, that, knowing that other woman's nature, he had had inevitable doubts, inevitable fears, and that he had silenced them?

Could he also say, without a sense of wrong-doing, that he had intended to disclose the fact of his previous engagement before entering into this newer and truer engagement, but that he had failed of his intention?

If it came to this, he would not say why he had failed, he would not say that it had been for want of a fitting opportunity, or that he had been hindered by his own great love, which had made him sensitive to the smallest risk; or that in the presence of Genevieve there had been something which had rendered the confession of a previous engagement to Diana Richmond all but impossible. He would use none of these ways of extenuation. His tale should be told with all severity of speech as if an enemy told it.

If it were possible to him to tell it at all he could tell it best in this manner; but was it possible? Could he compel himself to go down and confess these things to Genevieve, and to her father, with the open candour that circumstance required? Would not such candour seem almost brutal in its ruthlessness?

The ruthlessness of it would lie in the fact

that he could see no alleviation to the strange sorrow that he had brought upon one so entirely innocent, so guileless, so unsuspicuous of evil. He might be able to bear the worst himself, but could he ask her to bear it with him ?

That she would consent to brave anything, he did not doubt, supposing that she had first decided to accept the offer of a man dis-honoured to all seeming by a broken promise, but he knew that her consent would be given in ignorance. How could she know what the worst might mean ? How could she have prevision of the agony of slander, and shame, and humiliation, that would come into her fair beautiful life, and so mar it that it would never be the same life again ? It must be his prevision that must spare her, if indeed she might be spared. It seemed to him that he had but this to consider,—how he could spare Genevieve Bartholomew's name from the breath of slander and detraction.

The future that had lain before him in the morning, as the landscape below him had lain with its green pastures and its still waters smiling in the spring sunshine, had changed

even as the scene had changed. Where all had been light, and pleasantness, and songs of birds, and myriad flowers, there was darkness and obscurity, with no visible pathway through the overshadowed land. It had been morning, now it was night, night with him, even in his very soul.

Was the starry silence entering into that inner night? He was conscious of change at last; conscious of the fact that he was bearing trouble, and bearing it not well.

There was stillness all about him, and there came a stillness upon his spirit, making it possible for him to uplift his downcast face, to stand there on the edge of the moorland with his hands clasped together, as if in strong entreaty.

So he stood a long time, not knowing that it was long, not knowing that the great dark expanse of cloud that lay athwart the eastern horizon was beginning to lift a little from the sea. When he looked, there was a rose-red glow upon the distant waters.

It was but a faint glow, yet it flashed a light into the soul of the man who stood watching it.

“So it will be!” he said, speaking aloud in his sudden sense of relief. “So it will be! If I stand through the night, if I stand firm, and still, and silent as I have stood through this night, I shall see the morning.”

CHAPTER IX.

AN INVITATION.

“ And what then should I say ?
 Why, truly this : that whatso’er men’s plight
 There is a better and a worser way,
 If their discretion be not overthrown
 By force of their calamities.”

Philip Van Artevelde.

THOUGH several days had come and gone in the slow torture of suspense, they had left no bitterness ; there was yet a smile on the uplifted face of Genevieve Bartholomew when Kirkoswald entered the studio at Netherbank. It was an eloquent smile, and it said plainly, “ Through it all I have known that you would come.”

No history of these days was written in her eyes, or upon her forehead ; but Genevieve, looking into George’s face, saw certainly that

new records were graven there. She might not comprehend what she perceived, but her heart sank swiftly, even at his greeting, comprehending with unerring sureness the touch of change.

He was not aware of the change. He did not realize to how great an extent his solitary strife had darkened his countenance and wrought its influence upon his manner.

At the first glance at the artist's face, Kirkoswald had seen for himself that Noel Bartholomew was yet unaware of the words that had been spoken in Birkrigg Gill. He hardly knew whether he were, or were not, disappointed. Had Bartholomew asked but one question, that question had elicited all that was weighing so heavily on George Kirkoswald's heart and brain. He had prepared himself to speak if this opportunity were given. If it were not given he would not force it—not at least until he could see the next step beyond.

He knew, only too sadly, that silence would inevitably lead to misconstruction, misjudgment; but till the truth could be made plain he must endure to be misjudged.

Even yet, he saw nothing definite before him. There had been no change without or within since the night when he had stood under the stars, and had waited, simply waited, till the shadows of the night had risen slowly from the horizon, leaving the rose-red glow upon the morning sea.

The influence of that hour was still upon him, subduing his impatience, controlling his too eager desires, modifying the too strong spirit of rebellion that still stirred within him at times. The feeling that his duty was to wait, his task to possess his soul in patience, was deepening to a conviction.

The one thing above all others that would tax and strain his patience was the knowledge that it could not be understood, and if it were not understood suffering would be inevitable, not for himself—he was not thinking of himself now, but of Genevieve. Any sign that the suffering had begun to fall upon her would have tasked his resolution severely, but no such sign was given for him to read. There was a little natural confusion, a change of colour, a swift flash of recollection in her glance, but nothing more than this :

both father and daughter had received him with the simple courteous warmth that had marked his reception at the cottage from the beginning.

“ You will be expected to give an account of yourself,” said Noel Bartholomew, taking up his brushes again and turning to his easel. “ I should have been prepared to hear something serious if it had not been for Genevieve. I wanted to come to look after you, but she wouldn’t let me.”

“ Perhaps Miss Bartholomew may consider me to be sufficiently successful in looking after myself,” said George, with a touch of bitterness in his tone which certainly seemed to be uncalled for, and which perhaps surprised himself as much as it surprised anybody else. He was feeling very bitter as he sat there in the straight-backed chair of antique oak, where he had placed himself away from the window, away from Genevieve, who sat in the light with her golden head bent over her needle, and her pure, sweet face bereft of all expression save one of patient wonder. He had not prepared himself for this sudden appreciation of the pain

and loss that would arise out of his position. The moment was one of trial. Forgive him if he bore it ill.

Noel Bartholomew's feeling of wonder was quite equal to that of Genevieve, and his first thought was, very naturally, the thought that matters were not going so smoothly between his daughter and his friend as he had brought himself to hope they might. The same idea had occurred to him before during the past few days. It seemed to be confirmed now.

A little silence followed upon George Kirkoswald's unexpected reply; but Bartholomew soon ended it.

"I do not know how that may be," he said; but we are both of us aware that you have proved yourself to be very successful in taking care of others. . . . But I forget, I was not to thank you."

"No; don't thank me and don't remind me."

"Very good; we do not need to remind ourselves."

Genevieve looked up from her work with a smile, as if in ratification of her father's remark. She seemed to have a word ready

to use with the smile; but it remained unspoken, dying into silence, as the smile died into the look of patience that had been there before.

“ You will begin to wonder why I have come now,” George said at last, speaking in a tone that might almost be termed abrupt for him. “ I have come with an invitation, as much from Canon Gabriel as from myself. The foundation-stone, or memorial-stone, or whatever it may be, is to be laid at Soulsgrif in a fortnight or so. The Canon will let you know the exact day.”

“ The foundation-stone? Do you mean for the music-room?” Genevieve exclaimed, forgetting all in unconcealed delight. “ Are things so far advanced as that?”

“ Light is dawning upon me,” said Bartholomew. “ I do not wonder that we should have seen so little of you. Who is your architect?”

“ A man at York—a Mr. Bush.”

“ You have been there?”

“ Yes, I was there three days; the last three days of the past week.”

“ And the ground has been bought, the

builder chosen, the plans drawn and accepted, and a ceremony arranged for laying the foundation-stone ? Canon Gabriel did well to compliment you on your energy.”

“ I am glad to have something on which to expend my energy,” said Kirkoswald.

“ You find yourself possessed of a superfluity ? ”

“ It will seem like boasting if I say ‘ yes,’ nevertheless it is the truth at present. I have heard of people who could, by means of physical exhaustion, arrive at a most desirable and blissful state of mental hebetude. It is not easy.”

“ You have been making the experiment ? ”

“ I am still making it. That is one of my reasons for consenting to the Canon’s plea that there should be a kind of ceremony, so that he might make a semi-public day of it. It seems that he has been wishing for such a day for a long time. He wants to see the people of the neighbourhood about him once again ; he has reasons, so he says. There is to be luncheon at the Rectory.”

“ And who is to lay the stone ? ” Genevieve asked, looking up from the piece of pale

green satin that she was embroidering. The light above her seemed to throw the child-like curves of her mouth and chin into exquisite relief; and her face was full of the simple, beautiful, tender regret that was overcoming her perplexity—regret for the passing shadow that would so surely pass.

There was no sign that it was passing now on the face of George Kirkoswald. Genevieve's very natural question had developed another phase of the incomprehensible change in him and his manner. Something that was almost a frown had suddenly darkened his forehead, and the lines about his mouth were compressed as if with bitterness. He sat silent for awhile, not knowing how to keep the silence, nor how to break it by speech that cost so much.

His lips parted presently.

“Canon Gabriel will lay the stone,” he said, with most evident effort.

If he might only have explained — if he might only have told them that a month before everything had been arranged in his own mind on quite other lines—if he might have said that there had never been for him

the smallest question about the laying of the stone ; that he had decided that Genevieve herself should lay it, and that he had intended that her doing so should be taken for an open declaration of the engagement that existed between them—if he might have relieved himself of all this, and then have gone on to the rest, the sudden shock of pain and disappointment that had come upon him, leaving him in perplexity, in dread, in an endless seeming suspense, then it might have been that he would have had less need to crave the dull oblivion that comes of utter weariness. He might have borne the strain after that, and have borne it not so badly, having sympathy.

But it might not be, so he had decided, thinking and hoping that he did well, and at least knowing surely that he had not come to his decision through weakness or self-seeking, or dread of any pain that might come upon himself.

Presently he rose to go, but he lingered about the studio awhile, not seeing the questioning eyes that were now and then lifted to his, not wishing to see them, but knowing

that they were lifted, and understanding the unspoken words only too plainly. He would not forget. Some day he would answer them all, and in answering he would make amends for the present silence. He was not conscious that there was something in himself that was worse than any silence. Every moment he betrayed it in his manner. Now, as always, it was a courteous manner, but something was missing from it. The fine openness of its cordiality was gone; in place of it there was restraint, carefulness, and an apparently studious dread of relapsing into the old natural ways that had been so dangerously full of living charm.

Quite suddenly Kirkoswald stopped beside the easel. It was a kind of pause that the others felt, and they felt also the effort that was in his question.

“ Is that Yarrell Croft that you are painting ? ” he asked, as if unable to believe the thing he saw.

Bartholomew smiled. “ You are not complimentary to-day,” he replied. “ Certainly it is meant for Yarrell Croft. Shall I need to label it ? ”

“That will depend upon its destination, I should say. Pardon me, but what made you choose to paint such a place? Is it considered to be picturesque?”

Again the quiet smile quivered under Bartholomew’s moustache. He felt a sense of success in that he had aroused his visitor’s interest at last.

“Yarrell Croft is not picturesque—not at least in my estimation,” he said, “and I did not choose to paint it. I was asked to do so.”

“It is a commission?”

“Yes; it is a commission.”

There was a certain emphasis in the deliberateness with which Kirkoswald turned from the easel and walked to the window that looked out over the Marishes. He stood there some time. Matters had been complicated before. Had he unwittingly stumbled across a new complication?

Bartholomew also had his thoughts.

“I hardly know why I need trouble myself to mention the fact,” he said, as Kirkoswald came back again, “but it was not Miss Richmond who asked me to paint the picture; it was her brother. He asked me to paint two

views of the place, this and a view of the old gateway in the garden."

"In obedience to the commands of his sister, doubtless?"

"I believe not: indeed I may say that I have reasons for knowing that it was not so. Miss Richmond was in London at the time; and besides, there was an unmistakable air of unpremeditatedness about the request."

"I am glad to hear it," said Kirkoswald, with as little gladness in his tone as a man might have.

More than ever Genevieve was puzzled. It was quite within the range of things that George Kirkoswald should take an interest in her father's work. He had always taken an interest in it; but it had not seemed to her that he was in the mood to-day to care whether a commission had been given by one person or another.

Some idea connected with this matter had moved him, this was evident; but it was also evident that it had not moved him to forget the strange coldness and restriction of his new attitude. It was in his manner to her father as well as in his manner to herself.

This was not comforting ; nor did it tend toward a better comprehension of one whose every word and thought had always seemed so nobly and simply easy of comprehension. The change had been irksome, had it been nothing worse.

“ You did not give me any answer about coming down to Soulsgrif,” George said after another pause, and speaking as if he did not care much to receive any answer just then. “ I shall see you again, perhaps,” he added. “ If I do not, you will see the Canon ; he will have a better acquaintance with his programme than I have. It is his affair—the whole of it—not mine.”

“ You do not speak as if you were anticipating a pleasant affair,” said Bartholomew, with quiet surprise.

“ So much the better, since I am not misleading you. But it would be a wiser way not to speak of it at all—not at present. I hardly know what I can say truthfully that I ought to say.”

He was shaking hands with Genevieve as he spoke. Their eyes met for one long instant, long enough for the revelation of all

that might be revealed at that moment. For the life of him George Kirkoswald could not have kept back the truth from the glance he gave, even had he wished to keep it back, which could hardly be said of him, utterly at fault with himself and the world as he was. Genevieve was half-contented when he turned away. "Whatever the change may be it is not *that* change," she said to herself with a sigh of relief that was half a sob. Then other thoughts, other emotions, came crowding quickly one after the other; but that first thought remained through them all. "It is not *that* change," she went on saying to soothe herself. "It is not that.

‘He loves me still,
Let no one dream but that he loves still.’”

CHAPTER X.

THE BELLS RING LOUD WITH GLAD SOME POWER.

“ I could not choose but love her. I was born to poet uses,
To love all things set above me, all of good and all of fair.”

MRS. BROWNING, *Lady Geraldine's Courtship*.

THE church at Thirkeld Abbas being dedicated to St. Peter, and St. Peter's Day being in June, it was very natural that Canon Gabriel should choose that day for the small inaugural festivities that he had desired to have ; and the Canon's lightest wish was law to George Kirkoswald. There was to be a service to begin the morning with, that was why the bells were ringing so gaily up in the tower.

The little town was all alive by ten o'clock,

flags were streaming across the street in the hot summer sunshine; children in gay holiday garments with faces fresh as apple-blossom were running all about the place. Carriages were coming in from the country, disappearing under the wide archway at the Richmond Arms. Some of the gigs went down to the Brown Cow. The gig-people looked quite as happy as the carriage-people; and they were much merrier, if that meant anything.

When the service was over the people all went down together into Soulsgrif Bight. It was only a short distance, it seemed too short to some who hardly knew what it was to be out of doors on the morning of such a glad, glorious day as this. All the way by the roadside the pale wild roses were clustering in the green hedgerows, the woodbine swayed with the rose-sprays against the sunny blue beyond. The tall grasses in the cliff-top meadows surged to the light breeze, the lark sung overhead, away out of sight—

“Like a poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not.”

Naturally the broad stream of people that came out from the church had separated into little groups. The Canon was passing in and out among them, dropping a gentle word here, an encouraging word there; thinking all the while that to that man, or to that little child, he might speak no other word. But the thought in nowise saddened him. Nobody there seemed sad. "The weariness, the fever, and the fret" of life had been left behind for a little while.

Mr. Severne also was doing his best; he always did his best, though there were people at Thurkeld Abbas who snubbed him a little, because he held himself so cheaply at their service. He was very much at Mrs. Caton's service this morning, but Mrs. Caton was suffering some disappointment. She did not care to put up with the Curate while the Canon had walked for at least five minutes by the side of that dear, uncertain little Mrs. Damer, who had such inconvenient attacks of plain-speaking. The Curate was made to feel the Canon's indiscretion. Miss Standen was going down with the Pencefolds, and enjoying her walk very much. A little way be-

hind them was Mr. Ishmael Crudas, in a shining new black coat, aggressive white linen, and a pair of very large black kid gloves. It may be supposed that his individuality suffered, but it did not. There was sufficient in the man to enable him to carry off more than this; and even Miss Craven was obliged to acknowledge it as he walked by her side. She was angry with him for having dared to join her on this public occasion, but all the same she had expected it; and now that he was there she was very proud of him, though not perhaps quite so proud as he was of her. And indeed she looked all but handsome in the black silk mantle, and pink-trimmed bonnet that were still so pretty and becoming. Since the dead weight of anxiety had been lifted a little she had recovered to a wonderful degree the freshness of her youth, and something of the temper of her youth also. It was many a long day since she had smiled so gladly and freely as she smiled when George Kirkoswald passed by, raising his hat, and wishing her a courteous "good day."

Genevieve and her father were a little in advance. A tiny girl was crossing the road,

offering a posy of half-blown white wild roses mingled with scented sprays of blossoming thyme. The little ones were quick to perceive which were the flowers that pleased best. Genevieve was stopping to fasten the posy in her dainty white dress when George came up ; and at the first glance she saw that though there was still a sadness in his face it was not the same sadness that had been there before. There was no bitterness in it ; it could not be that bitterness, which is almost always littleness, should stay long in a nature like his. He shook hands, holding Genevieve's hand in his lingeringly ; and he uttered his greeting in the warm, quiet, emphatic way that she had loved in him from the beginning —it made the mere fact of meeting him something to be remembered. The girl's heart bounded as he spoke, and fear departed swiftly. It was going to be a good day, then, after all ! It was only now that she knew how little she had hoped.

“ You will have seen Canon Gabriel,” George was saying, speaking more especially to Mr. Bartholomew ; “ and I dare say you know more than I know. No ? Well, I

suppose there is to be a brief service of some kind down in the Bight, merely a sort of dedication of the place to good uses. Then we are to come back again and have luncheon at the Rectory. After that there is to be tea in the schoolroom at Thurkeld Abbas for the children and their friends. . . . I should advise you not to stay for the tea," he added in a lower tone, and turning to Genevieve. "It will make the day too long, too fatiguing for you."

Genevieve only answered by a quick change of colour, and drooping eyelids. She was not quite sure that there was not some danger of tears. It was all so unexpected, the protecting authoritative tone that was associated with the first words of his that she had ever heard, the glance that was so full of unspeakable meanings, the manner that was all deference, all tender regard for her, for her happiness, her comfort. Had she then doubted, after all? . . . No; it was not that, it was not doubt; but all the same this new certainty was sweet; and being un hoped for at that moment, it was doubly precious.

For Genevieve, as for some others, the top of Soulsgrif Bank was reached all too quickly. The people were stirring down in the Bight; and flags were flying there also—bunting is always forthcoming along the coast. Two or three fishing vessels in the bay, lying at anchor, were decorated from stem to stern. When the Canon came in sight at the top of the bank, with his surplice flying in the breezy summer sunshine, a band of music sent its patriotic strains floating up the cliff side.

“That is ‘Rule Britannia,’ ” said Canon Gabriel, who had just joined Kirkoswald and the Bartholomews. “I mention it that hereafter I may not be classed with Dean Hock, who claimed to be acquainted with two tunes, one was ‘God Save the Queen,’ and the other wasn’t; but I believe no one ever heard him venture the name of the other.”

Quite suddenly there burst upon the throng of people who were coming down the bank, a full view of the site of the music-room; nay, much more than the site. The wall was some twelve or fourteen feet high on the seaward side. The ground had been

well chosen, though it was only just out of the reach of the wild waves that dashed so often and so madly into the little Bight. It was a kind of plateau just above the houses on the north side. The people would only have to step from their own door to the door of this new place of entertainment which was already the chief topic of conversation among the fisher-folk. They did not understand much about it yet ; they were waiting, but not suspiciously, not disdainfully, as Yorkshire folk are apt to wait for the development of any new thing. Since the brave master of Usselby had to do with it, it could only be right and good.

The people were still going downward, the strains of the music still stealing upward, mingled a little with the splash of the waves, and the shouts of children at play by the water-side. Presently another sound came grinding into the harmony, the sound of carriage wheels coming downward with the crowd. Canon Gabriel turned, wondering a little that any one should willingly drive down such a road as that. He ceased all at once to wonder.

“Did *you* invite Miss Richmond?” he asked, turning with some surprise to George Kirkoswald.

There was a sudden silence, a sudden pain; on George’s face there was a sudden and strange pallor.

“Is it Miss Richmond?” he said, speaking in a voice that seemed like a hoarse echo of his own.

CHAPTER XI.

CONCERNING CHARITY.

“ ‘Twas well we met once more; now we must part.
I think we had the chief of all love’s joys
Only in knowing that we loved each other.”

The Spanish Gipsy.

PERHAPS every one of that little foremost group, except Genevieve, had noticed the change on George Kirkoswald’s face. Genevieve had turned aside to speak to Ailsie Drewe, who had a message to give from Davy. There was a tear on the woman’s cheek. She grieved for the absence of her little lad on such a day as this.

Looking up Genevieve saw the carriage, and recognized its occupants. It had stopped in the shade of the tall cliff. Miss Richmond

was leaning back, holding her parasol daintily. Cecil was looking round.

The people were all streaming toward the heaps of building material that were lying about on the rocky plateau under the cliffs. Mr. Smartt, the builder, was making explanations. The room was to be a long L-shaped room. The main portion was to be a music-room, which could also be used as a school-room, lecture-room, or reading-room, as occasion demanded. The transept, if it might be so termed, was to be shut off by an oak screen. And, if the Archbishop permitted, it was to be used as a mission-room. The Canon had written to His Grace of York, but this matter was not yet settled. On the southern side there was to be a tiny cottage, to be occupied by some one likely to be of use in the place. This was nearly all that could be definitely pointed out to the admiring and wondering people. They were told that the stone-mullioned window to the north was to be filled with stained glass; and that the glass was to have an inscription on it, but Mr. Smartt did not know what the inscription was to be. He believed that it would pertain

to some event that had happened in Mr. Kirkoswald's family. That was all that he had to tell.

The memorial-stone was to be placed over this particular seaward-looking window. It was a large round-topped tablet—

“Carved with figures strange and sweet,
All made out of the carver's brain.”

It had been intended to place an inscription on the stone also, but this intention was held in abeyance. There was only the date, Mr. Kirkoswald's initials, and an awkward, empty space underneath.

A little wooden platform had been raised outside so that the Canon might stand there when the stone was lowered into its place. As soon as his surplice was seen floating above the crowd there was an instant silence everywhere, a pause before the singing of the hymn which the choir sang in simple, sweet, childlike voices.

Some prayers were read, another hymn sung; then the great carved tablet was lowered and set carefully in its place upon the mortar which the Canon had spread with a new trowel. After that the stone was de-

clared to be duly laid ; and the little service of commendation was ended.

At the end of it the Canon stepped forward again to the edge of the platform. He had a few words to say—a few words of explanation, of entreaty, of desire that the building should be a means of helping them all to fulfil the two great commandments. He dwelt most upon the second of the two—the command that there should be brotherhood among men, and all that brotherhood implies. He was growing very earnest as he urged the simple philosophy of his religion. “Be good, be loving,” he said. “There is much sorrow in life, much contradiction, but nothing can contradict the truth or the beauty that comes of simple goodness, simple lovingness. St. Paul himself knew of nothing better. He counted the great grand gift of prophecy itself less than this gift of human loving-kindness. The gift of prophecy ! Think how glad—glad to the verge of awe—any one among us standing here to-day would be, if he were to find himself suddenly admitted to the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the seers ; endowed with the gift of foretelling

future events in the splendidly poetic language of an Isaiah—language that might rouse the world from its indolence and luxury, its worship of wealth, its forgetfulness of God. A man so dowered would hardly know how to express his gratitude. And yet St. Paul counts this power *an inferior power to the gift of loving*. He says it quite plainly. Nay, he says much more—he declares that even faith, faith strong enough to remove mountains, would count for nothing if he had not love. ‘If I have not love, I am nothing.’ That is his own expression.”

There was a little rustling now on the edge of the crowd, and, as it grew louder, the Canon waited. He could not but see the cause of it all. Kirkoswald saw it too, though he had stood with bowed head, and eyes downcast under his dark brooding forehead. It was as if he felt Miss Richmond coming sweeping toward the place where they stood ; her brother by her side, her cream-coloured dress with all its fringes and ribbons of dark gold silk quivering and fluttering as she moved. She was exquisitely dressed. Her bonnet was of the same colours, ivory-white

and dark shining gold. Her gloves, her parasol, her fan, had all been chosen to match. Perhaps she had never looked more beautiful, more touchingly fascinating than she did as she stood there among the fisher-folk of Soulsgrif Bight, listening with downcast eyes and serious face to the words that were falling from the lips of the fragile-looking old man who was speaking so directly from his heart.

He went on again as soon as he perceived that the people were waiting. "I have not much more to say," he began. "We were speaking of love, the love that envieth not, that vaunteth not itself, that is not puffed up, that doth not behave itself unseemly, *that seeketh not its own*. Ah, if we would think of that awhile!—the beauty of a human life that was not seeking anything for itself, that was seeking always to add something to some other life—some peace, some happiness, some freedom from care and pain, some consolation in time of trial, some sympathy when all the outer world was dark and full of gloom. What a crown the angels would see always on the forehead of the man or woman

who lived so! It could hardly be necessary to say that such a one would be not easily provoked, would be able to bear all things, endure all things, would believe all things, hope all things, would rejoice only in the right, the pure, the for-ever true.

“I have purposely left to the last, one of the most magnificent clauses of St. Paul’s description of charity,—he declares that it ‘thinketh no evil.’ I prefer the newer reading, ‘*taketh not account of evil!*’ To what a height a man must have risen before this could be said of him—that he could not be provoked, and that he took no account of any evil! Does it seem as if such a one would be far away from us? It would not be so. He would be here among us, living your life, or living my life. There alone would be the test of his power of human lovingness—if he lived among the unloving, among those who were blind to his love, deaf to his sympathy, who were unable to understand his life, his motives, his aim; who would repay his best efforts with coldness, neglect, contumely, humiliation.

“Into the life of each one of us there

comes some measure of human evil, human hardness, human cruelty. Perhaps, unhappily, some of us must go back to the endurance of such things to-day. . . . Let us think of it in the hour of our need, of this fine ideal of St. Paul, the *love that taketh not account of evil.*"

This was almost the last word. The little descant had only occupied a few minutes. The Canon came down from the platform, Mr. Severne carefully helping him ; the band began playing the Old Hundredth, the people began to assort themselves into groups again, and Genevieve, turning, found herself face to face with Diana Richmond and her brother.

Miss Richmond put out a pretty cream-and-gold coloured hand.

"How are you to-day, Miss Bartholomew?" she asked with quiet emphasis, and looking intently into Genevieve's face as she spoke, as if watching for some sign. Genevieve was blushing, looking somewhat confused. The Canon was coming toward them, with Mr. Severne ; and Miss Richmond began to speak of the little address.

“It was so perfect in its way, was it not?” she was saying in a tone that had something almost like humility in it. “You would know better how to express it than I do, the charm of it, I mean. Is it his style? There is something—what shall I call it—distinction?—that makes the most commonplace things seem new when they have been repeated by him.”

The Canon came up, looking a little as if he had not been able to help hearing what Miss Richmond was saying. Mr. Severne blushed as if she had spoken of him.

“What am I to say for myself?” Miss Richmond asked in her prettiest way of Canon Gabriel.

“What am I to say for *myself*?” the old man said, having a desire to be courteous as well as truthful.

“Say that you forgot me.”

“But that would not be true. I did not forget you. I thought of you more than once.”

“Ah, that sounds terrible! But go on, please; let me know the worst.”

“The worst is that I invite you—and of

course Mr. Richmond, to go back with us now to luncheon, if you will be so kind."

The invitation was accepted, a little perhaps to the Canon's surprise, and certainly to his regret. Kirkoswald hearing of it felt that an end had been put to any prospect of enjoyment the day might have had for him. There would be nothing but dread now; and a momentary expectation of some *coup de théâtre*, such as Miss Richmond would so well know how to accomplish on such an occasion as this.

Genevieve had declined Miss Richmond's invitation to accept a seat in the carriage, and Cecil was told to signal to the coachman to drive back up the cliff before them, Miss Richmond declaring that she should enjoy the walk. Mr. Severne, who was growing puzzled over things, came to Genevieve's side as they moved to go. He had been watching for this opportunity all day. Miss Richmond deliberately turned, and waited for George Kirkoswald.

"Who exactly is the master of the feast?" she asked in her usual low, deliberate tone, and holding out her hand with the finely

gracious gesture that she knew so well how to use. "Canon Gabriel! Ah; I have been asking him to tell me why I was not invited, but he was too polite to tell me the truth. Now, I command that you tell me."

"I do not know. I have had little to do with the affair. I never saw the list of people who were to be invited."

"No? That is somewhat strange, is it not? Well, I bear no malice."

She said this with such a simple air; there was such a look of truth—of almost touching good-will upon her face, that Kirkoswald was altogether perplexed. He paused a moment, thinking of the night under the stars, when he had only waited, waited silently. . . . Was it well to test the efficacy of speech?

"This is neither the time nor the place to discuss grave matters," he said at length, speaking with effort. "Forgive me if I seem to have little tact in introducing anything grave. I will only say a word. It concerns the letter I received from you. You would get my reply?"

"Pardon me; it was no reply."

"No; you are right there," said George;

and in truth Miss Richmond was right. The answer he had sent was little more than an acknowledgment of the receipt of her letter, and it had been sent simply because he had not been able to bring himself to a thing so discourteous and cowardly as refusal to reply to a letter written by a woman, though that woman were his greatest enemy. "You are right," he said; "I wrote too briefly, but I thought it better to do that than to say anything I might afterward repent having said."

"You are growing cautious," she said with a smile.

"If only it be not too late," replied George with meaning. "But I did not allude to the matter for the pleasure of talking it over. It occurred to me when you spoke just now that, perhaps, your coming down here to-day might imply some change—some modification of your intention. I thought if it were so I would make it easy for you to express the change—that was all. It was a hope. If it were a mistaken one you have only to say so."

Miss Richmond raised her eyes slowly in

their dusky depths ; her crimson lips curved slightly towards disdain.

“ If I understand your hope rightly, it was most decidedly a mistaken one,” she said, speaking in low yet firm—it might almost be said bitter tones.

Kirkoswald said no more ; there was nothing more to be said just then. The crowd was going up the hill with them, busy with its own enjoyment ; the band was playing a sentimental air with variations. Some one said it was “ Love Not.” Mrs. Caton had secured the Canon’s attention at last, or rather her little daughter, Ianthe, had secured it, which was the same thing. Mr. Bartholomew was giving eminent satisfaction to Miss Craven by walking on the other side of Mr. Crudas. A little behind them was Genevieve, and the puzzled, but quite happy, Mr. Severne. Things were just as they should be from his point of view.

“ Miss Richmond is very handsome, don’t you think so ? ” he was saying to Genevieve, reserving in his own mind an opinion that it was a style of handsomeness he did not like. He did not care for the dusky beauty of

olive-tints, and purple-black hair. For him the one beautiful woman was a woman who looked like embodied sunshine ; and that, it seemed to him, was just how Miss Bartholomew looked to-day.

Genevieve was a little excited—excited by surprise and wonder, and a strange, nameless stirring of nameless fears. She was grateful to Mr. Severne for remaining so faithfully by her side, and trying to amuse her, as he was doing. There was no unhappiness on her face, and her colour was not coming and going as it did sometimes. It stayed on her cheek, and on her lips ; her large-irised, violet-grey eyes were full of a beautiful tender light ; and the sunshine caught the golden ripples of her hair, and the wind played with it under her wide-brimmed Gainsborough hat, over which the large white feathers were drooping. All her dress was white ; she liked to have it so herself, her father liked it too, and there was another who had asked her what she would do if some day she found herself prohibited from wearing any but white dresses ? She remembered the day and the question. They seemed far away

now. Everything simple, and straight, and comprehensible seemed far away.

They had reached the Rectory by this time. The luncheon was waiting; some thirty or forty people sat down, Miss Richmond taking her place at the Canon's right hand with a charmingly natural gracefulness. Mr. Severne sat at the other end of the table, happy because Miss Bartholomew was there with her father, not too far away for conversation.

It was not particularly interesting conversation. Mr. Bartholomew was preoccupied; Genevieve was watching for some one who never came—the Canon explained his absence. Mr. Kirkoswald had had to go down into the Bight again to consult about some urgent matter with the builder. Miss Richmond expressed her regret openly. She repeated the expression of it before she went away, and repeated it with so much meaning and emphasis that the people who were left behind wondered over it. Was it not all dead and forgotten, that old affair between the master of Usselby and the mistress of Yarrell Croft? Had there not been new

whispers on the wind of late, whispers of another and a likelier attachment? The people who approved of Genevieve were beginning to think a little hardly of George Kirkoswald. They had imagined him to be a man who would at least know his own mind about a thing so important as this; and they had not imagined him to be one who would trifle for an hour in any matter in which trifling could lead to danger or to pain.

* * * * *

A few hours later, when the schoolroom tea was over, and the people had all gone quietly home, George Kirkoswald dragged himself somewhat wearily up through Murk-Marishes to the cottage at Netherbank. Mr. Bartholomew had gone across the fields with Ishmael Crudas. Genevieve was alone in the little sitting-room; she had opened the casement window that looked out upon the orchard; the low sun was streaming through the leaves of the climbing rose-tree that went up over the thatch; the pink petals came floating slowly in over the flower-pots. A pair of white and pearl-tinted doves had perched on the window-sill, the one was

cooing softly, the other was listening with her head bent downward, listening steadfastly as if with a quite human power of attention.

Kirkoswald had intended to go down to the studio, not knowing that Bartholomew was not there. His footstep made no sound on the rank grass. Presently he stopped by the cottage wall. Had the cooing of the doves arrested him? Was there any one there out of sight among the rose-leaves, speaking softly in the low red light?

It was only a few words that he heard, words spoken gently to gentle living things, as people will speak sometimes who live much alone, and are much acquainted with sorrow.

“Do you love each other so?” the voice was saying in a musical undertone. “Do you like to sit there and say loving, comforting things? Do you understand each other? Do you always understand each other, even when you are apart and cannot speak? Have you faith in one another always; or is there no need of faith in that world of yours? I wish I knew, I wish I might know if you perplex each other, give each other pain.”

A minute later Kirkoswald was standing in the room by Genevieve's side. She did not know that he had heard any word of hers. She only saw on his face a great sorrow, a great resoluteness, a great silence. Blended with these there was a strong passionate yearning that she could not but comprehend. He would not sit down, though she asked him to do so.

"I must not stay here," he said in a quiet, sad way. "I ought not to have come, it sounds like weakness to say that I could not help it. But I may say it, since it is the truth."

Genevieve stood quite calmly opposite to him. She still wore her white dress; a great loop of her shining yellow hair had fallen over it; she was looking at him with an infinite wistfulness in her dark beautiful eyes.

"You know that you are perplexing me?" she asked gently, and with an evident effort after self-command.

"Perplexing you! Do I know it? I hardly know anything else; I hardly think of anything else. Night and day now I am wondering what you are thinking of me, how

you are feeling toward me; and if when all this torture is over you can ever have the same feeling you have had toward me? It is all the consolation I have now, *that you have had it.* Nothing can take that from me, the knowledge that you have cared for me."

"And you are thinking that I have changed?"

"Changed! I am looking at you now with an almost boundless wonder because of your changelessness, because of the beauty of your faith in one who must seem so utterly faithless, so utterly worthless. And the intolerable part of it is that I cannot rightly ask you to have faith in me. If I could even ask you to try to keep up your faith I think the worst would be over. . . . I could wait then, I could endure then."

"And if I say unasked that I will have faith, will that help you to endure?" the girl said, standing there tall, and still, and seeming as if a new nobleness had come into her nobility.

"If you say that, it will almost do away with any need for endurance," George replied

with a quick light in his eyes, a quick expression of relief, of gladness.

“Then I will say it; I say it of my own accord, that I will have faith in you so long as you shall need my faith.”

“And if circumstance seem strong against me?”

“I will try to be as strong as circumstance.”

So she spoke in a vain confidence, not knowing that it was vain. How should she know until circumstance had borne her down before it as a reed in the marsh borne down before the wind?

CHAPTER XII.

“NOT YET THE SUN HATH DRIED HIS
THOUGHTFUL TEARS.”

“Brutus, I do observe you now of late;
I have not from your eyes that gentleness
And show of love as I was wont to have:
You bear too stubborn and too strange a hand
Over your friend that loves you.”

SHAKESPEARE, *Julius Cesar.*

“LIFE is interesting if not happy,” said a great thinker the other day, and we all of us admitted the truth and felicity of the phrase on the instant. We had known it all the while, but we had been waiting for some one to say it.

Life is always interesting, because it is always hopeful.

From the man of highest and most eager

culture, to the last and dullest and most self-contented Philistine, you will nowhere find a soul living out its days without hope of some good it has not yet attained.

We are seldom strong enough to turn round upon ourselves in times of really great and desperate trial, and look dispassionately upon the interest underlying the hour and the event. It is there. In some cases, doubtless, it affords a certain support, but it does so unconsciously. We should look upon ourselves as traitors to ourselves, and rightly, if we had the hardihood to look up from under the Cross, and say, "This is interesting."

There is something amazing in the alacrity with which we most of us find an element of interest in the worst calamities of others. The daily newspaper sells a double edition when there is a Tay-Bridge disaster, when a *Princess Alice* comes into collision in the Thames, when a *Eurydice* with several hundred souls on board disappears in a snow-squall. These things are topics of conversation for the social hour. They have no true silencing awe for us. We speak of

them between remarks on the latest political blunder and the fineness of the weather. In a word, we find them interesting.

It is a platitude to say that there are people who find the affairs—the most untoward affairs—of their friends and neighbours interesting. It is also a platitude to say that there are people who have no other interest outside themselves than this of watching the course of events in the little world about them, not watching to sympathy, to help, but to a dull, mindless curiosity. Yet even these find life interesting.

Coming back to our own life, if we have any vision at all, any sense of the picturesque, the pathetic, the dramatic, we must certainly find the past years interesting to look back upon. No outsider can see the fine and subtle interweaving of the threads of experience as we can see them for ourselves. No stranger can intermeddle with that dead joy that can be made to live again for you at your lightest desire; no other heart knows the bitterness that was in your heart as you walked through the fire in which your youth perished—as you fought your way alone

through the floods that overwhelmed the years. No written record could ever have half the interest that that unwritten record has for you, and will for ever have while memory keeps its greenness.

The past has its interest ; the future a more keen, and intense, and mystic interest still. If there is an insipid day it is this one. But we live it patiently, since it leads on to the next.

So, in patience, in a serene and un vexed patience, Genevieve Bartholomew lived through that summer at Netherbank ; the first summer she spent there, and—the last.

Unhappily it was a wet summer—unhappily for her and for her father ; perhaps even more unhappily still for poor Miss Craven.

The sadness was upon all the land. Morning after morning broke in grey gloom, in heaviness, in silence. There was no sound save theplash of rain upon the sodden moss-filled pastures ; upon the black worthless hay that was lying in the fields when August came ; upon the green, backward, unpromising corn. The harvest was doomed,

and it was the seventh doomed harvest in unbroken succession.

Was it the weather that was affecting Noel Bartholomew to so great an extent? Did he feel the pressure of the heavy grey, rain-laden clouds upon his brain? Genevieve knew that he missed the constant exercise that he had been accustomed to take; she missed it herself; and they agreed that the appetite for out-door life was capable of causing as keen suffering as the appetite for daily food when it came to be denied its legitimate satisfaction.

So far as his work was concerned, he had done the best he might do—the best and the most; but the best was not good, and the most was far below what he had hoped. Those summer months, upon which he had counted so much, were gone by—gone in suffering, in comparative unproductiveness. Want would have stared him in the face if he had looked that way. But he had not looked; he had hoped on bravely, persistently, silently.

This strange trial would pass as others had passed, if he only stood firm. Had he not

that word of Thackeray's for his consolation, declaring the possession of genius itself to be of hardly superior value to the power of holding on ?

He knew that holding on was not an easy thing, nor so simple as it might seem ; nevertheless, since it had to be done it were well to do it quietly.

When he came to think of it, he found a word of higher authority than Thackeray's, and older. The thirteenth chapter of the third book of the "Imitation of Christ" seemed to have been written for his present need.

"Where is thy faith ?" asked the dead voice that seems to be speaking so near to us at times. "Stand firmly and with perseverance ; take courage and be patient ; *comfort will come to thee in due time.*"

In this temper he had waited ; in this temper he had worked when work was possible. Of late he had put aside all other work, and had wrought at the view of Yarrell Croft whenever it was possible so to do. Having his sketches, it was comparatively mechanical work ; and it could be done without much reference to the light.

Besides, he had another motive, a motive that seemed so pitiful to himself that he kept it out of his own consciousness as much as he could.

The picture, being a commission, would be paid for as soon as completed ; more and more as the days went on he became aware that this was influencing him ; and so strange was his mental constitution that the influence was paralyzing rather than stimulating. There were days when he sat, with his palette set and his brushes before him, from the morning till the evening unable to raise his hand to the canvas with any impetus from his brain. At such times the dropping of the dull rain upon the skylight seemed to him like Nature's tears of sympathy ; but it was a sympathy that had no help in it, no comfort.

As the picture drew slowly toward its completion he was amused to find that it was already acquiring a kind of local notoriety. His strong effort toward an absolute and inartistic literalness had won for him an appreciation that his idealized "Œnone," his fine "Judas," his spiritual "Sir Galahad"

would never win for him in the neighbourhood of Murk-Marishes.

Miss Craven had begun to admit to herself that after all, since it was never too late to mend, there might be some chance that Noel Bartholomew would yet become a great artist, and Mr. Crudas had asked permission to bring more than one of his friends to see the admirable accuracy and fidelity with which every window and door of Yarrell Croft had been portrayed, every tree painted just how and where it stood, every fold of the distant hills and dales given, and all on a few feet of canvas.

Here, if anywhere, was a triumph of art; and Murk-Marishes at last began to be proud of the grey unimpressive man who was so very far from coming up to anybody's idea of a man of genius.

When the picture was at last finished, when the last touch of yellow sunny light had been put upon the hills, the last sweep of purple mystery upon the dales, a handsome frame came down from London, and the picture was placed upon a large easel where it could catch a fuller light.

“I shall not send it home,” Mr. Bartholomew said to Genevieve, who stood beside him looking into the picture with rather wondering eyes. “I shall write and tell Mr. Richmond that it is completed, and that I should like him to see it before it is sent to Yarrell Croft.”

“You think he might require some alteration?”

“It is possible; it is possible, too, that he may not approve of it. I should hardly like to have it coming back again to be altered to suit his taste.”

“His taste is for colour; I think you have considered it.”

“Don’t be ironical, dear.”

“Mr. Kirkoswald says that I have a gift of irony if I were to allow myself to develop it.”

“Is he afraid of it that he comes so seldom?” Then seeing the quick change of colour on his daughter’s face, the unmistakable pain, Bartholomew began to speak of some other subject; but he did not forget this one. More than ever he was perplexed by the change in George Kirkoswald.

Something had happened, something that had turned the man aside from being himself. He came and went in fitful ways; his mood was capricious when he did come. To-day he would be sad and silent, and betray a touching and wistful humility, as if conscious that the impaired and imperfect friendship had been impaired solely by himself. Another day, and all that would be changed; there would be nothing visible save a kind of inner strenuousness with hardness of manner and unrest of soul.

There were days—sad days enough—when the artist wondered within himself that a man whose worldly well-being was so unmistakable as was that of George Kirkoswald should find himself so far out of parallel with the trend of circumstance. It was barely conceivable to Noel Bartholomew just then. But nevertheless, none of these things touched his loyalty, or his faith. All would be made plain when the moment came.

The music-room was finished by the end of August—that is to say the roof was on, and the floor was laid. Kirkoswald's interest in that had never abated; and

other people's interest seemed to be growing about his own. Sir Galahad was working with a will with a view to his position as conductor of the entertainments to be given ; and it was very natural that he should need a good deal of advice and help from Miss Bartholomew, seeing that his own musical knowledge was hardly equal to the demands likely to be made upon it. It was fortunate that Netherbank was within an hour's walk of the Rectory at Thirkeld Abbas.

“ I—I don't know what I should have done if you'd never come to Murk-Marishes ! ” he exclaimed one day. It was characteristic of him that he was continuously being impressed afresh by the favourableness of his advantages. But there was danger just now that he might be led into mistake concerning the nature of them.

Genevieve, of course, did not say that it was probable that if she had never come to Murk-Marishes, it was also probable that Mr. Severne's services, as conductor of concerts at Soulsgrif Bight, might never have been required. She never mentioned George Kirkoswald ; and it seemed to Mr. Severne

that the mention of his name by others did not awaken any very pleasant emotions within her. He was becoming keenly alive to this and similar facts.

He was becoming alive to everything that concerned Genevieve Bartholomew.

She could not help being amused sometimes; but more often she was glad of the brotherly seeming interest that descended even to note the progress of her embroidery. It appeared as if he cared for nothing better than to sit and watch her deft white fingers, almost as white as the lilies that grew to their silken perfection under them. Mr. Severne did not wonder that she liked to embroider lilies better than anything else; she was so like a lily herself; and sometimes when she was a little sad he could not help wondering if any gentle silver rain of sorrow ever came near her. He was thinking of some lines of Wordsworth's that he had in a little book which he always carried in his pocket. He took it out one day—Genevieve was looking very sad that afternoon—and he turned at once to the lines he knew so well.

“That always makes me think of you,” he said, indicating the words as he spoke.

“You have been wretched; yet
The silver shower, whose reckless burden weighs
Too heavily upon the lily’s head,
Oft leaves a saving moisture at its root.”

Genevieve smiled. “What makes you think I have been wretched?” she asked.

“Oh, well, I didn’t mean that particularly. Perhaps I don’t exactly know what I do mean. But the verse makes a sort of picture in my mind—a picture of a tall, beautiful lily, drooping a little, and all weighed down with shining drops of rain.”

“You are growing poetical!”

“Am I? That is because I come so much to Netherbank.”

“Or else because you read this book so much.”

“Is it a nice book, do you think? Do you like it? because if you do, keep it—please keep it. I should so like to know that you had something of mine.”

CHAPTER XIII.

“ I SAW THIS YOUTH AS HE DESPAIRING
STOOD.”

“ Fortune has not been kind to me, good friends ;
But let not that deprive me of your loves,
Or of your good report.”

Philip Van Artervelde.

ONCE, when George Kirkoswald had not been at Netherbank for a fortnight or more, Genevieve had a fancy that he was down in Soulsgrif Bight, hoping to see her there. She hardly comprehended the feeling, it was so strong, so sure, so full of yearning.

It was an August day, dull, grey, windy ; yet too full of life and movement to be depressing. There was still no sunshine ; the haymakers were turning the hay in the sodden fields ; the corn was pale and unripe,

some of it was lying on the ground as if an army had passed over it.

All day Noel Bartholomew had remained in his studio, working at the second picture that Cecil Richmond had commissioned him to paint. The first was still on the large easel, still standing in the full light. It was covered with a curtain of old embroidery, which was lifted from time to time when neighbours came, asking to see the view of Yarrell Croft.

It was over a fortnight now since the note had been written, saying simply that the picture was finished, and that it awaited Mr. Richmond's approval.

No answer to that note had been received.

"I suppose he intends to call," Mr. Bartholomew said when Genevieve expressed some surprise.

"All the same he should have sent a reply. Simple courtesy required that he should do so much as that."

But the simple courtesy had not been forthcoming: and, so far, Mr. Richmond had not called. It was beginning to be felt as a slight strain on Bartholomew's already

over-tense nerves. He declined to accompany Genevieve when she went for her daily walk. He would rather not be out when Cecil Richmond did come, he said. If he went out at all it was after the sun had set, when the bats were wheeling in the air, and the night moths quivering over the meadow-lands.

“ You will let me persuade you to-day, father,” Genevieve said, when the yearning to go down to the Bight had grown too strong to be resisted. “ I will write a note for you; and we will leave it to be given to Mr. Richmond if he should call while we are out.”

Bartholomew’s hand was weary, his brain and his eye were weary. He had upon him that strong desire to be out under the air of heaven which grows to such a passionate intensity when the man who desires it is overtaxed by the fearful double strain of labour and anxiety. Yet not even now would he leave the studio.

“ It will not be for long, dear,” he said. “ It is imprisonment, but it is not imprisonment for life.”

“No! but I wish it had been for a set term; then one would have known what to expect. I feel a sense of oppression every time Mr. Richmond enters my thoughts. It is cruelty to you—to both of us.”

“If so, it is the cruelty of thoughtlessness.”

“Which is as bad as any other cruelty, and as inexcusable.”

There was quite a frown on Genevieve’s pale and usually serene face as she crossed the barley-field to go down to the Bight alone. She was going to see Ailsie Drewe, and she had a strong desire that she might meet Cecil Richmond as she went.

There were a few stray cottages at the entrance to the village. The little gardens were gay with scarlet turn-cap lilies; sweet peas were dropping over the hedges; nasturtiums were climbing among the jessamine sprays. In the orchards the fruit was maturing on the trees; the gooseberry-bushes were bending low under ripe, red loads. The blackbirds were busy among the currant-trees. Bees were murmuring and hovering everywhere.

There was a turn in the road. One of the

tiny thatched cottages, with its front garden and its back orchard, was down in a green, leafy hollow to the left. There were children standing by the wicket-gate, listening, looking, wondering.

Under the willow-tree by the roadside a young man, with a pale face and long, fair hair, was playing a violin. As Genevieve came up one of the children ran out with a penny, and the young man moved forward to take it with difficulty. He was very lame: there was something pathetic in his lameness; there was something more pathetic still in the sudden glow of shame and confusion that spread over his face as he turned and met the sympathetic eyes that were fixed on his. The bow dropped from the strings, and the violinist moved painfully, yet with some dignity, away out of sight, disappearing along a narrow path between two deep hedges of hawthorn.

Genevieve was curiously impressed. She had caught the air he was playing; it was from Mendelssohn’s *St. Paul*, “*But the Lord is mindful of His own.*” It was strange to hear an air like that played by a street

musician, and played as that was played. There were other strange things that came floating out of the brief scene. The boy's face—he seemed little more than a boy—was one that would not soon be forgotten.

It was not only a sad face; there was something of surprise in its sadness, something of disdain, as if he scorned himself for the thing he did, while wondering that he could do no other.

Besides, there was a look of race about the setting of the hazel eyes, about the curving of the upper lip, about the turn of the head on the shoulders—a look that shabby clothing could not touch in any way. No; Genevieve would not forget him, nor would she forget his playing. All the way down into Soulsgrif Bight she heard the strain. It was as if some one sang the words:—

“But the Lord is mindful of His own: He remembereth His children.”

Yet it was difficult to ignore a certain inconsistency between the plaintiveness of the music and the touch of wildness, of irreconcilableness in the manner and appearance of the musician.

Ailsie Drewe lived on the side of the bay opposite to the music-room. Genevieve could see as she went down that the workmen were still about the place. Some were putting windows into the new cottage, some were making a rustic wooden paling to enclose the garden. There was to be a playground beyond; and some terraces were to be cut with paths winding away across the cliffs to where the barren alum shale merged into the green luxuriance of Birkrigg Gill.

"There'll be no knowin' the place when all's done," Ailsie Drewe said to Genevieve. "Mr. Kirkoswald's just been here; you'd meet him, mebbe? He hesn't been gone more nor half an hour; an' I told him 'at Soulsgrif Bight 'ud never again be such a world's-end-of-a-place as it allus had been. He laughed a bit; but he didn't laugh nowt like what he used to. He isn't nut te saäy i' good spirits, miss?"

This was said interrogatively; but Genevieve did not answer; and it seemed to Ailsie Drewe that Miss Bartholomew was not in particularly good spirits either. It was strange that people who had no need to

care for the harvest, or for the coming of the herring, and who had nobody at sea to be anxious for when the storms came on, should yet have times of silence and depression. If Miss Bartholomew had happened to be Davy's mother there would have been reason enough for pensiveness and heaviness. . . . Genevieve did not forget to ask after the little lad.

“He's in America, miss; at a port they call New Orleans—so he said in the letter. You should ha' seen it, but Ah've lent it te Marget. Ah couldn't read it mysel'. Ah got it last Tuesday; an' Ah sat leukin' at it all t' daäy, an' cryin' acause Ah couldn't tell one word 'at my bairn said.”

“I wonder what it is that makes him so strangely bent upon a sea-going life?” Genevieve said, remembering the day when he had gone up to Netherbank to say “good-bye,” and also remembering how she had divined the child's unspoken feeling of finality about the act and the word. “He doesn't seem to care so much for the sea itself,” she added.

Ailsie's brown eyes filled with slow tears.

She sat looking steadfastly away out of the window, so that the tears might not be seen to fall; and a change came into her voice all at once.

“It’s a kind o’ fate, miss; it’s no more nor that, nor no less. It’s years agone now —he was nobbut a bairn o’ six or seven when he used to wake out of his sleep night after night cryin’ out ‘at his father wanted him—his father ‘at he’d never seen. An’ nothing would pacify the bairn; he’d go on cryin’, ‘Take me to my father; he’s callin’ o’ me, he’s waitin’ o’ me; he wants me to go wiv him, mother.’ . . . An’ Ah know it, miss; Ah know it; the little lad ’ll ha’ te go.”

Ailsie stopped, crying bitterly; and Genevieve cried too, till Ailsie got up and showed her the drawer where she kept the boy’s small possessions; the tools that he had used when he made the model of the *Viking*, a picture-book full of ships that Canon Gabriel had given to him, his Sunday-school reward books, a pair of his baby shoes, and a thick, bright curl of his yellow hair.

“Ah look inta that drawer every night, miss, afore Ah go te bed; an’ it’s allus like

partin' wi' the bairn afresh, an' Ah wonder where he is, an' if his father's waitin' for him yet, an' how long he's set to wait. . . . That daäy when the *Viking* went doon i' the Bight Ah knew 'at my husban' weren't far away fra me then. Ah thought mebbe he might hear me when Ah said, 'It's me 'at 'll ha' te wait noo, Jamie; Ah'll ha' te wait all aloän as lang as Ah live, an' then Ah'll ha' te come an' try te find ya both.' I allus think 'at Ah sall find 'em. Ah've more hope o' that nor I hev o' seein' Davy again here."

Genevieve went away shortly afterward; but the tears still kept coming unbidden to her eyes as she went up Soulsgrif Bank in the grey afternoon light. There was no pale, fair-haired violinist under the willow by the cottage in the lane now; but Genevieve, half stopping to look for him, saw another and a taller figure coming by the narrow pathway under the hawthorn hedge. It was George Kirkoswald, as she perceived at a glance, and a very brief space of time brought him to her side. Just as he came up some shots were fired in the furzy hill-side pasture close at hand. Genevieve was startled, and the fact that she

was startled helped to account for the sudden glow of crimson on her face.

"Are you not yet used to that sound?" George asked, glancing over the hedge with some annoyance as he spoke. "It is Mr. Richmond," he continued. "I believe there is a shooting-party at Yarrell Croft, so that you will probably have a chance of getting accustomed to the guns. But——"

Kirkoswald stopped there. He had been intending to object to the idea of her walking about the roads and field-ways alone just now. The thought struck him with bitterness that the privilege of objection was hardly his.

"You were going to say something," Genevieve asked, timidly lifting her eyes to George's; and then he saw that there were traces of tears on her face. It was as if the sight took something of strength from him.

He did not reply to her question immediately. When he spoke he asked another question.

"Do you remember that sunny December day in Soulsgrif Bight?" he said. "It was the first time you went down after the storm.

We were talking of trouble, and I asked you if you thought that when trouble came you could speak of it to me?"

"And I said that I could: I remember well."

"Then what is it that is troubling you now?"

Genevieve smiled; it was so easy to tell him that Ailsie Drewe had unsealed the fountain of her tears. She did not tell him what she had suspected herself, that they had waited an excuse for flowing freely. It is very true that we "blush one way, feel another way, and weep, perhaps, another."

It takes many kinds of darkness to make a life of sorrow; but the sorrow may seem one, and the emotions run into each other in ways unknown as yet to scientific analysis.

When Ailsie Drewe's pain and fear had been touched upon with sympathetic insight, Genevieve had yet another tale to tell—the brief story of the boy violinist who had so quickly made such a strong impression. She was grieved that between her shyness and his sudden shame he should have passed beyond her ken unsolaced, unspoken with, unhelped,

for that he needed help was but too evident.

"And what am I to do if I come across him?" asked George with a little amusement in his interest.

"What would you do if you saw me singing in the street for bread?"

A great tenderness came into the man's dark, overshadowed eyes, a great lovingness.

"I should take you home," he said, "and I should try to make your life so fair that you would forget that it had ever been other than fair."

"Then think of me if you find my lame boy wounded by the wayside. I am sure he is wounded, I am sure he has fallen among thieves, I am sure the Priest and the Levite have passed by on the other side, leaving him half dead."

They were passing through the village of Murk-Marishes now. The sun had set, the children were going home; the blacksmith's anvil ceased ringing as they passed the forge at the upper end of the village street. Just then a great red harvest moon began to rise over the eastern ridge of the moor. Slowly

the glow of it spread behind the dark, rugged outline, crimsoning the whole heaven above ; the trunk of a leafless oak-tree was slanting athwart its disc, throwing out gaunt, supplicating arms. There was a quietness in the evening ; but somehow it was a quietness that was not peace, and was far from any gladness.

No word had passed between these two since that word that had been said on the evening after the small fête in Soulsgrif Bight. It seemed far away now, and somewhat overlaid by the various meanings of subsequent experience. There had been no change, none that could be indicated, or alluded to ; but the subtleties of feeling escape definition, and the result of contradictory emotions is apt to disappoint even one's own calculation. Genevieve would probably have found some difficulty in answering a sudden question as to her love, or her faith, with absolute truthfulness at the present moment.

The girl was clinging strongly to that faith of which she had declared herself to be possessed, but it needed every effort she was

capable of making to enable her to hold by it steadily.

To the last she would hold by it; not till it was torn from her grasp would she let it go.

She did not fear that it was likely to be so torn; all her belief turned toward a sudden passing away of gloom and pain. It was for this that she watched, for this that she waited.

At any moment she might meet George Kirkoswald on the moor, by the sea, in the village street; and meeting him she might see at a glance that the cloud was off his soul, that he was free, that he was the man he had been on that day, and always before that day, when he had asked of her a word of assurance in Birkrigg Gill.

The gloom was there now, on every feature of his face, in every gesture, in his very gait as he walked up the lane to the field where the bearded barley was nodding under the red moon.

All the way he was silent; and Genevieve saw that it was a silence that it would be well to leave unbroken.

Would she have been astonished if she had

known that he was thinking of another?—if she had known further that that other was Miss Richmond?

All the way he had been thinking of her, wondering what would be the last result of defiance.

Suppose that at this moment he were to take Genevieve's hand in his as they stood there under the ash-tree by the stile, and if he were to tell her all that had passed in those years of blindness and mistake, and all that had happened to bring him into his present perplexity—how would it be with him then?

He seemed to see quite plainly how it would be. It would be easier for him to make his confession now than it would have been at one time. He knew Genevieve better, and he had a clearer insight into the largeness of her nature. Besides he had suffered much, and suffering makes many hard things easy. Then, too, mere change in his suffering promised some relief; and he was sure of sympathy.

Yes, he was sure of sympathy. There would be a shock, a silence, a great surprise.

His dishonour would be felt to be as a stain upon her life. Then there would be a great forgiveness, with an aftermath of absolute peace so far as Genevieve was concerned.

The temptation was strong, very strong. He imagined his yielding; he could see the fair face beside him growing fairer in the sudden light of revelation and reconciliation. The wistful look that had lain in the violet eyes so long would be there no longer; the finely curved mouth would smile its own smile again. Life would be taken up where it had been broken off; compensation would flow into the hours; and in the days to be, no account should be taken of this temporary suspension of felicity.

For all this there would be a price to be paid; and he told himself that he would have been prepared to pay it if he might have known the utmost to which it was likely to amount; if he might have known further that payment would be demanded from himself alone.

But again he told himself that, unfortunately, none knew better than he knew of

what Miss Richmond was capable. Her threats had been open in part, and dark in part, but he knew well that she was equal to persistent fulfilment of them to the last letter.

Still, at that moment but a light wind of thought would have swayed him toward the risk and the certainty of full disclosure. He lifted his eyes to Genevieve's face ; there was a smile there : on her lips there was a small yet disconcerting civility.

"Will you not come in for a little while ?" she said. "My father will be glad to see you in his solitary confinement."

"Is he ill ?" George asked with concern.

"No : he is not ill ; but he is very likely to become ill," said Genevieve, proceeding to explanations.

"I think that very likely the delay is to be accounted for by the fact you mentioned just now," she added, "the fact that there is a shooting party at Yarrell Croft. I say accounted for, but not excused ; though I agree with my father that there is nothing but thoughtlessness behind it."

George Kirkoswald did not reply. An instant conviction had struck him that there

was more than thoughtlessness underlying the affair.

He seemed to have been prepared for the thing he heard ; to be prepared for more, though certainly he could not have told why he had anticipated ill results from such an exceedingly natural and common circumstance as the giving of a commission for a picture.

Long afterwards he knew that he had anticipated ill from the beginning. Now he was not sure that he foresaw only ill. There might be a clashing of elements that would leave the air clearer. It might even be that already he saw a faint gleam upon the distant sea of darkness over which he had looked so long, and so patiently, always waiting for the gleam, always feeling that it had been promised to him if he would wait.

Certainly now he would wait a little longer, long enough to assure himself that the dawn of better things was at hand ; or that it was not, and not likely to arise out of the quarter toward which he was now looking. His firm impression was that he had seen a promise of light.

The current of his thought was changed altogether; and the man himself seemed changed.

“Tell Mr. Bartholomew that I will be down in a day or two,” he said, raising his hat, and turning absently; coldly away. Genevieve went through the clinging barley with a pallid, stony face, and an unutterable sinking about that poor loving, longing heart of hers.

CHAPTER XIV.

“STRIKE AUDIBLY THE NOBLEST OF YOUR
LYRES !”

“O did he ever live, that lonely man,
Who loved—and music slew not?”

KEATS *Endymion*.

FOR a week before the giving of the concert in Soulsgrif Bight there was an excitement in the air; a very pleasant and innocent excitement it seemed to be, productive of courtesies, animations, small vanities, overtures, musical and other. Songs were practised at cottage doors, choruses came swelling out through the closed shutters of the blacksmith's shop.

Mrs. Caton had kindly insisted upon providing the little Sunday-school girls who sang

in the Church choir with white muslin dresses and blue sashes. Mrs. Damer sent a dozen posies of pink flowers when the evening came. Others sent smiles, evergreens, good wishes, harmonious little compositions of words set to no music but their own.

If underneath all this there was a special ground-tone of sorrow anywhere, it was at Netherbank, which some people counted to be the very centre and source from whence all the gladness and goodness were flowing. An impression had got about that Mr. Kirkoswald had certainly been inspired by the words and ways of another ; and down in the Bight the fisher-folk said openly that their gratitude was due as much to Miss Bartholomew as to the master of Usselby Hall.

That they were grateful, and had all manner of pleasant anticipations, was one of Genevieve's strongest motives for keeping up a brave bright face before her little world. Another motive was her father's need of her bravery. Only once before in his life had he needed it so much.

All day he had remained in his studio ; the finished picture of Yarrell Croft on one easel.

before him; the view of the Priory Garden unfinished on another. He had not touched the latter. Genevieve had set his palette, and prepared his mediums, but he had never moved his hand to touch them.

After a whole long, silent, unexplained month had passed, Mr. Bartholomew had written a second note to Cecil Richmond. He had used much the same terms as on the first occasion. No word of doubt, of impatience had escaped his pen. He merely begged to remind Mr. Richmond that the picture was finished and awaiting his approval.

Had he not been so unwise as to have written that first note, had he sent the picture home as he would have done but for his own considerateness, he had avoided all this strange and inexplicable pain. But how could he have foreseen such a turn of affairs as this?

A second month had all but gone by now. The sound of guns had ceased in the neighbourhood, the heather had bloomed and was fading, and Bartholomew had not seen it. Somehow it seemed to this sensitive, nature-

loving man, that all his life he would miss that one year's heather.

What if he should have no other chance of seeing the heather in bloom upon the purple hills?

Beyond doubt in these two months he had grown more apprehensive, more tremulous, more shrinkingly alive to dread, and pain, and evil of every kind. The hours that he should have spent on the moor when the sun was setting, or down by the soothing murmurous sea, where always he had found relief and uplifting, had been spent in his studio. He had sat there surrounded by his work, and the suggestions and associations of work; and he had sat, brooding, fearing, looking into the darkness that was upon his life until brooding had paralyzed him.

So strangely had his power gone from him that he hesitated to compel himself to touch the *Enone*, the *Sir Galahad*, or the *Judas*. The latter was a long way from being finished; the two former were so nearly done that the work required upon them was of a most delicate kind, and needed judicious and well-considered handling. Another hindrance lay

in the fact that a great desire had come upon him to make some radical alterations in the dress and background of the *Œnone*. Only at Genevieve's entreaties he had deferred his project. She was trusting that the desire would pass away.

She knew now plainly that it was need of money that had compelled him to work at the commissions given by Mr. Richmond. For awhile she had been rather glad that he had had these to fall back upon; but long since all gladness had faded out, long since she had begun to share her father's unspoken sense of wrong and oppression.

But for his poverty the pictures had gone into the fire long ago. He had come to hate them, to hold himself in contempt for having consented to paint them.

The humiliation of his present position was intense—complete in its intensity.

Even had there been no question of any previous acquaintanceship between Miss Richmond and himself, there was a peculiar and searching sting in this disdainful silence, this discourteous refusal to reply by so much as one word to the two courteous letters that

Bartholomew had written. Both Miss Richmond and her brother would be aware of the fact that Noel Bartholomew could not walk over to Yarrell Croft to ask what was the cause of this contemptuous attitude.

No other subject of thought was possible. This one thing had wrought itself into every act and every phase of his life. It was turned to every possible light, judged by every possible standard ; it was blamed ; it was excused ; it was denounced ; it was forgiven.

Anything would have been better to bear than this. Had the young man come to Netherbank and said openly, "I do not like the pictures," the matter would have been at an end. Had he even written straightforwardly and said, "I do not now care to have them," then also there had been no further suspense or pain. Bartholomew could have turned himself to some other work with what strength was left to him. As it was, every day, every hour was adding to the ill that had been wrought in the artist's unstrung and overstrained soul.

Even on this day of the concert he had been unable to rouse himself. Genevieve

had sat beside him, she had drawn him to speak out of the overfulness of his heart. Then she had read to him for awhile; and all day she had hoped to win him to consent to go down to Soulsgrif Bight with her in the evening.

She was still trying to persuade him when George Kirkoswald came; he was on his way down to the Bight. It was six o'clock, and nearly dark, but no lamp had been lighted in the studio. "I am not earning anything to pay for light or fire, or even for the food I eat," Bartholomew had said just before he had heard George's footstep on the orchard pathway. Then he changed his tone saying hurriedly, "Not one word of this to Kirkoswald; and put on the gayest dress you have, if you wish to please me."

It was hardly possible to put on a very gay dress when nearly three miles of rugged road had to be passed in the late twilight. Yet Genevieve looked very lovely in her pale blue clinging cashmere gown with its velvet trimmings of the same colour. She went down to the studio when she was dressed; and it could hardly be said that she was

disappointed to find that George had not succeeded where she had failed.

“I shall be glad to be alone,” Bartholomew had declared to George Kirkoswald. “If any note or message should come I shall be here to receive it. There will be no delay. If I were down at the music-room I should be sure that my presence was required here.”

It need hardly be said that Kirkoswald was perplexed—perplexed to the uttermost. To him the conduct of Cecil Richmond seemed simply a cause for annoyance, for irritation at the worst, if any one were disposed to be irritated by the action of an individual so unimportant. His perplexity did not leave him. All the way down into the Bight he was wondering whether he could do anything to bring matters to a crisis of some kind. He was prepared to do anything that might be done.

He did not speak of it to Genevieve. Keturah was there in the background, and Miss Craven. Mr. Crudas was waiting by a street corner at Thirkeld Abbas.

Mr. Severne being powerfully under the influence of that general nervousness which

is so afflictive to the amateur mind when it dares the pains and pleasures of professional responsibility, had gone down to the Bight nearly an hour before. His nervousness did not show itself in any distressing form. He was waiting at the door of the music-room to welcome Miss Bartholomew: his crimson blush was framed in a dropping archway of evergreens, and lighted by a hundred little lamps of pink pearly glass. Good wishes were inscribed in holly leaves upon the walls; great pots of flowers, chrysanthemums, dahlias, curving ferns, China-asters, and a few late roses stood all along the front of the platform. Behind there was a woven screen of small-leaved ivy and amaranth.

A few old people had taken their seats already; they sat there with solemnly wondering faces, and a new gravity in their grave eyes. When Mr. Kirkoswald came they stood up, and the old women made curtseys in the ancient fashion. It was all very impressive so far. Just then the children began to file out two by two from the door to the right of the platform. There was no gravity there. So much white muslin, so many blue sashes, such

a unanimity of pink-and-green posies could only be displayed with smiles and bright glances.

The door by the platform led through into the cottage. All was surprise here, even for Genevieve. The amateurs had not yet arrived; but there was an elderly woman sitting by the fire expecting their arrival—a pale, sad woman, with a neat cap, almost like a widow's cap, half-concealing her soft red hair. She had a black dress on—quite new; and she spoke in a refined and very quiet manner when Mr. Kirkoswald turned to her.

“Where is Wilfred, Mrs. Gordon?” he asked. “I want to see him for a moment before the entertainment begins.”

“He is in the reading-room, sir,” replied the woman, with an almost anxious deference. “I believe he is arranging the new books that came to-day. He was wishing to see you about some magazines.”

George Kirkoswald went away; and Genevieve was left for a few moments alone with Mrs. Gordon. She had a curious sensation of recognition, though she knew that she had not seen the woman nor heard of her before.

She was rather puzzled between her refined manners and her helpful ways. She arranged Genevieve's dress, fastened up a stray wave of her yellow hair with wonderful deftness and lightness of touch. A little later she rendered similar services to Mrs. Caton and Mrs. Pencefold, and also to the two Miss Damer. No touch was required to give finish to the appearance of Edil and Ianthe Caton. The tiny creatures stood in their pink silk frocks as if they had just stepped out with their expensive little feet from the latest fashion-book. All the same, they were pretty children, and sweet-tempered.

The terrible moment came at last, Genevieve Bartholomew had not prepared herself for its terribleness. She had never stood on a platform before, never found herself uplifted above a sea of human heads and eyes. It was only a very small sea after all, and there was hardly a face there that she did not know more or less; nevertheless the sense of exposure, of the vainness of all efforts to shrink from it, was very trying. Mr. Severne might be nervous, too, but Genevieve could not help envying him; he seemed so much

at home on the platform. He was giving directions here, whispering irrelevant remarks there. The little blue-and-white choir was ranged at the back against the ivy screen. The ladies sat on the right of the platform behind the chrysanthemums. The piano was at the other end, there was a music-stand or two, and a couple of chairs in the middle. Altogether the soft pink light fell upon a very pretty tableau.

The entertainment opened with a four-part song of Mendelssohn's, "*The May-bells and the Flowers.*" It was sung as a glee; and Genevieve played the accompaniment. George Kirkoswald was at some distance from the platform, standing just where he could see the pale blue figure, the white moving hands, the crown of yellow hair. He watched her for awhile, then he sat—

"Holding his forehead to keep off the burr
Of smothering fancies,"

He could not forget the grey, lonely man whom he had left sitting by the fire at Netherbank, and he knew that Genevieve did not forget. Even from where he sat he could see the drooping curves about the beautiful

mouth, the shadow of sadness under the white eyelids, and within the deep dark eyes.

When the glee had been sung, Mrs. Caton swept forward in a black velvet dress to the piano. She played a piece of Schumann's, an *Arabeske*; and she played it with considerable skill. The people seemed to be wondering over it, caring as much to watch as to listen. They had not yet arrived at the point of applauding freely. They were not sure that it was quite correct to clap their hands and stamp with their feet on the floor in such good society as this. There was a touching tendency on the part of the older people to repress such manifestations until they saw that Mr. Kirkoswald was doing his best to encourage them. Appreciation gathered slowly to its high-tide after that; and by the time the first half of the entertainment was over an expression of something very like enthusiasm had been elicited.

There was a pause, a little interchange of civilities, approbations, small pleasantries. Then Mr. Severne made an announcement. He begged to have the pleasure of introducing a stranger to the people of Soulsgrif

Bight, a stranger who had come to live among them, to try to help them, to teach any grown-up people who might care to come to him in the evenings for instruction, to give them books out from the library when they wanted them ; further than this he was capable of amusing them, delighting them, as they would have the immediate pleasure of finding.

Then Mr. Severne turned, and made a little gesture of invitation ; and the stranger, coming slowly and painfully forward, was introduced to the audience as Mr. Stuart.

He stood in the middle of the platform, a youth of nineteen or so, with long fair hair, a wan, worn face that had no smile on it, and hazel eyes that seemed at once wild and wistful. They were the eyes of the pale woman in the cottage ; and the somewhat angular oval of the face was the same. It was a face that Genevieve recognized at a glance.

The first note of his violin, a long-drawn note of thrilling sweetness, awoke her from her trance of surprise. She looked down the room ; George Kirkoswald was waiting

for the look, for the smile, for the expression of wondering gratitude. He smiled back again. He was very happy for this one hour, happier in that he had tried to make others happier ; and had, in a measure at least, succeeded.

What is there in the music of the violin that makes it strike so much more readily and surely straight to the human heart than any other music ? It would seem as if its strings had a humanity of their own, a suffering, pleading, haunting humanity. Its cries linger on your ear, its appeals melt you, its soft singing and sighing tranquillizes you in moments when the aggressive tones of a piano would drive you to distraction.

All this Wilfred Stuart understood ; and it seemed, too, as if he understood his audience. The most ignorant of the people sat entranced, and tears were seen dropping slowly over furrowed cheeks. A minute or two later and broad smiles broke under the tears, while big sea-boots kept time to the tune of " Weel may the keel row," and " There's nae luck aboot the hoose." This at any rate was comprehensible, and to be understood by the

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meanest. The house had been brought down at last.

The next item on the programme was Genevieve's song. She had never thought of it since she came on to the platform, and she was as much overcome by her surprise as if she had never had the smallest intention of singing it. She went forward quite mechanically. Mr. Severne put the music into her hand; Mrs. Caton sat down to the piano, and struck the opening notes boldly.

It was Mrs. Browning's song, *The Mask*, that Genevieve had undertaken to sing. The prelude is brief. Genevieve was hardly ready. She had to make a great effort to begin the opening lines—

"I have a smiling face, she said,
I have a jest for all I meet."

But in singing as in other things it is the first step that costs, and Genevieve was hardly aware of any further cost. She could not help perceiving that from sheer nervousness she was singing better than usual, that her voice was stronger and freer, and had a fuller range. She did not look toward the place where George sat; if she had done so she

could hardly have seen on his face any indication of the intensity of his emotion. Not the smallest vibration of the penetrating voice escaped him; its very unevenness of tone was, in a certain sense, a pleasure to him, though he felt certainly that the unevenness arose out of imperfect control over a too-perfect sympathy with the touching words of the song.

"Behind no prison grate, she said,
That bars the sunshine half a mile,
Are captives so uncomforted
As souls behind a smile.
God's pity, let us pray, she said,
God's pity, let us pray.

"Ye weep for those who weep, she said,
Ah, fools! I bid you pass them by.
Go weep for those whose hearts have bled
What time their eyes were dry.
Whom sadder can I say? she said,
Whom sadder can I say?"

All the rest of the concert went by like a dream for Kirkoswald. The Miss Damer and Mr. Severne sang a trio; Wilfred Stuart came forward again with his violin, and was received tumultuously; then everybody sang *God save the Queen*. Congratulations,

thanks, transports, all went by like sounds that pass when sleep is upon the brain, leaving only a sense of weariness and confusion. George was glad to get out from the room, away from the green wreaths, the compliments, the pink lamps, the elaborate "good nights." Under the quiet stars life might come to its own again.

CHAPTER XV.

“I SHOULD HAVE BEEN MORE STRANGE, I MUST
CONFESS.”

“Yes! hope may with thy strong desire keep pace,
And I be undeluded, unbetrayed;
For if of our affections none find grace
In sight of Heaven, then wherefore hath God made
The world which we inhabit?”

MICHAEL ANGELO.

It was some time before the stars shone down upon the utter quietness that George Kirkoswald desired. Not till Thurkeld Abbas had been passed, and the last parting word said there, did he feel able to breathe as freely as he wanted to breathe. He walked on quite silently for awhile; Genevieve, walking by his side, was silent too.

He thanked her for her silence presently,

adding, with a touch of humour, “ And all the while I know you are, as young ladies sometimes say, dying of curiosity.”

“ No ; I shall never die of curiosity,” Genevieve replied. “ All the same, ‘ I want to know.’ But first I must congratulate you.”

“ Upon what felicity ? ”

“ The felicity of neatness. You have managed your little surprise admirably.”

“ And you are satisfied ? ”

“ I am satisfied.”

“ And you give me credit for obedience ? ”

“ Implicit obedience.”

“ It was perhaps more implicit than you know. You remember the day on which you saw Wilfrid Stuart, and your injunctions to me ? ”

“ Distinctly.”

“ If I was fortunate enough to find him, I was to take him to Usselby Hall.”

“ Did I say that ? ”

“ You said much more than that. I was to do to him as I would to you.”

“ I remember. And by way of complying you have made him—what exactly have you made him ? Music-master to Soulsgrif Bight ? ”

Curator? Librarian? Professor of things in general?”

“All these.”

“Then certainly you have not done to him as you would have done to me. I could never have undertaken tasks requiring such varied ability. . . . Is he equal to your desires?”

“More than equal, especially so far as his music is concerned. He is a pupil of Joachim’s.”

“A pupil of Joachim’s! And found playing by the roadside!” exclaimed Genevieve.

“Even so. But that was the first day that he had played by the roadside, and I think it will be the last, poor fellow! . . . He owes all to you.”

“Before I question that statement I must know what happened on that evening of which you have such a distinct remembrance.”

“Very little happened. I went slowly over the moor by the light of the harvest moon. The wind rose a little; it came in gusts; one gust brought to me from afar the faint sound of a violin. Think of it—violin

music on Langbarugh Moor after dark! I have no doubt but that I should have taken it to be the death-song of the Kirkoswalds, if you had not described the playing of your *protégé*."

"And after?"

"After I had to take some slight trouble to discover the exact spot from whence the sound came. It was at a greater distance than I could have believed. When I did reach it I found it to be a kind of hollow under the edge of a heathery crag. Your wild-eyed youth was sitting on a grey boulder, playing to himself in the moonlight. There was a touch of romance about the situation."

"And Mrs. Gordon was not there? She is his mother?"

"She is his mother, and she was in London, poor woman, trying to hide herself, in order to escape from the wretched treatment of her second husband. It is a most heartrending story. The boy told me a little that night after we got home; the mother told me a little more when she came, and I have guessed the rest. It seems that originally she was a kind of upper-servant in an old

Scotch family, and she married a son of the house against the wish of his people. They had only this one boy, Wilfred, and his father designed him for the Church ; but, unfortunately, Mr. Stuart did not live past the child's tenth year. They seemed to have been a very happy little family, with sufficient means, and the widow was not left in poverty. But she must needs marry again, and marry a scoundrel, who has robbed her and her child of every penny they had, and the boy, in obedience to his mother's wish, was making his way into Scotland, to see if he could obtain any assistance for her from his father's relations. His money failed him at York, and he was intending to attempt the rest of the journey on foot. Think of it, with his lameness ! ”

“ Was he always lame ? ”

“ No ; his step-father, in a fit of drunkenness, threw him and his violin from the window of the house they lived in into the street ; some passers-by picked him up senseless. The whole history is, unhappily, commonplace enough in its outlines ; but I fancy there has been capacity for an

uncommon amount of suffering under it. It is no wonder that the lad seems as if he could never be reconciled with the world again."

"Does he care for his mother?" Genevieve asked.

"He seems to care passionately."

"Then he will soon be reconciled."

There was a pause. Keturah passed in the clear blue darkness with a seafaring cousin. "I wonder if she is happy—quite happy?" Genevieve was thinking to herself. She could not help thinking also of her own poor, crushed, and broken love—broken in seeming if not in truth.

She was as far as ever from understanding the turnings and driftings of her fate. She only knew that when she was strongest, lightest-hearted, there was always most hurt and pain underneath.

Her one care was to hide the pain; so that George Kirkoswald may be forgiven if sometimes he doubted whether any deep pain existed. This was only sometimes; at other times he hoped that there was no under-current, that Genevieve's faith was as strong as she had declared it to be—

strong enough, at least, for peace. His full conviction was that she would not have to bear the test much longer.

So far she had borne it splendidly ; this he would always remember. He had expected it of her ; but, nevertheless, he had seen his expectations fulfilled always with a new admiration, a new reverence for a nature so wide, so clear-sighted, so utterly unselfish.

No look of fretfulness, of doubt, had ever met him ; never by a glance had any egotistic claim been betrayed. The expression of her face, the tones of her voice, said always, "I love you, I have faith in you, and, though I do not understand you, I am trying to wait patiently until you can make yourself understood."

This had been her attitude. It was her attitude still, and by its very uneagerness it added intensity to the things he was already enduring. A little it baffled him, a little it drew him to look into its nature, as if he would seek some more certain satisfaction for the yearning tenderness that beset him, that was always in him, though he set it in such harsh keeping.

Even yet he would not ask her to continue her faith in him ; he told himself that he could not while that dead promise was held by another woman to have life in it. To do this would be to add dishonour to dishonour.

He could not forget—not for an hour—that an engagement was held to exist, that he was one of the two parties to it, and that the other counted every written word to mean the same thing to-day that it had meant years before. To him that old false bond was as the bond of an old false marriage, hateful, not binding, yet full of potency for pain and ill. He knew perfectly well that Diana Richmond did not expect him to fulfil that engagement now. But for some reason of her own, which he could but darkly divine, it suited her purpose to hold him back by threats from a marriage with Genevieve Bartholomew. That she had a purpose, that she chose to hide it in mystery, he was fully convinced. He was convinced also that the mystery would be made plain if he would but wait.

He was sick to the heart of waiting

now. Surely he might say so ; surely he might cover his face with his hands and cry aloud—

“I am weary of all this! I am very weary! Genevieve, my child, you will believe that I am weary?”

She drew a little closer to him under the shadow of the starlight. She laid one hand gently upon his arm, and let it rest there.

There was something that was almost a sob in her voice as she spoke ; it sounded full of tears.

“If you are weary, then I am not,” she said. “If you are troubled, if this silence, this coldness between us troubles you, then I have no trouble. I can bear it all. Oh, ten times more than all, since I know certainly that you are bearing it too!”

“Did you think, then, that I was not?” George asked in pained surprise. “What have you thought of me? Tell me how I seem to you. Tell me the worst.”

“There is no worst now. The worst is the sorrow that you have. . . . I may not ask about it? . . . You would tell me if you could tell me?”

“I ought to have told you all long ago,” George said passionately. “I ought to have told you of all my life. It would have been so easy once. Then it was made impossible, or I thought it was. Some day—I pray it may be soon—it will be possible again; and then there shall not be a passage in my life that I will not lay bare before you. You shall know everything. I have had a lesson.”

They had reached the cottage now. The barley was standing dark and still on either hand. A bird flew out from the ivy that was round the porch.

“Wait a moment,” said George, taking the hand that Genevieve had laid upon the little railing. “Only a moment. It is so hard to go when one is happy!”

“You are happier to-night?” Genevieve said softly. In her heart there was a little wonder, a strong wish. Why could he not always be happy? Why should he entertain these moods, these silences and darknesses that came upon him, and remained so persistently? It was not difficult to take things, even bitter things, with a certain “sweet

reasonableness” of outer expression that always helped the inner life of the soul.

“Yes; I am happier,” George was saying. “I should always be happy if I were near you. It is another atmosphere, and I am another man. You draw me upward. I believe only in good when I am with you.”

“Then you believe in good always. . . . I am always with you,” said the girl, with a deeper and more passionate meaning in her tone and in her accent than the words might seem to hold. She would have said more, but it seemed as if her voice failed in the effort. Her emotion was stronger and deeper than she could bear. But surely that impulse toward further unfoldings was not difficult of comprehension!

CHAPTER XVI.

BEHIND THE SCENES.

“I speak not as of fact. Our nimble souls
Can spin an insubstantial universe
Suiting our mood, and call it possible,
Sooner than see one grain with eye exact,
And give strict record of it. Yet by chance
Our fancies may be truth, and make us seers.
’Tis a rare teeming world, so harvest-full,
Even guessing ignorance may pluck some fruit.”

GEORGE ELIOT, *The Spanish Gipsey*.

“LIFE is a series of surprises,” said one, adding, “and would not be worth taking or keeping if it were not.”

The peaceful soul, however, is not in love with surprises. It likes to foretell the day and the event. One postal delivery on each of the six work-days is enough, and more than enough; and life has been found to be possible without the daily newspaper.

Still, let a man guard his life as he may, the unexpected will happen, especially, some will say, if it be also the undesired ; and no calculation can prepare you in any effective way for what the coming day may bring forth.

If Noel Bartholomew, sitting on that grey October day in his studio at Netherbank, could have heard, by telephone, for instance, all that was passing in the morning-room at Yarrell Croft, it is easily conceivable that his surprise might in itself have overcome his despondency, apart from the circumstantial value of the thing he heard.

It was a pretty room in the south-west corner of the house. It had windows looking either way. There were flower-beds in front ; chrysanthemums stood in the dewy mist ; a few geraniums lingered ; a little mignonette scented the place ; a Gloire de Dijon rose or two hung sadly against the window pane.

There was no sadness inside the room. A large fire was blazing in the handsome modern grate ; thick rugs were on the floor ; thick rich curtains hung over the windows

and doorways. Everything was ablaze with lightness, and brightness, and warmth of colour. You could not turn your head without finding that your eye was arrested by some picture, some group of fine ornaments, some display of rich and rare lace, or china, or embroidery. It might be that the only harmony was the harmony of universal magnificence, but that is by no means to be despised if it be free from any too obvious discord.

There was no discord there. Miss Richmond herself, though it was but mid-day, was dressed with an extreme elegance. She had on a cashmere morning robe with a Persian pattern on it; fine muslin ruffles were round her throat and wrists; her small slippers were embroidered. On her head there was a curiously-shaped black velvet cap, which she was trying on for the first time. It was the production of her new French maid, Félicie, who stood beside her mistress looking into the glass that reflected the beautiful face with its dark overshadowing of purple-black hair and its deep-set, lustrous eyes. Few women so far past their first youth could

have borne the morning light as Miss Richmond bore it; a fact of which she was very well aware.

“And you think it suits me, Félicie? It is not too large?” Diana was saying.

“Non, madame. Le chapeau n'est pas trop grand. Il sied parfaitement à madame.”

“And you think it looks better as it is? We thought of having the band embroidered, you know.”

“Mais il va mieux comme ça. De la broderie? non. Quand il sera brodé, il perdra son cachet. Il est superbe comme il est, porté par madame; et——”

But Félicie did not finish her sentence. The door of the room was thrown wide open with a bang, and Cecil Richmond rushed in with a burning spot on each of his pale cheeks and an open letter in his hand. Seeing that Félicie was there, he made a sudden effort to control himself.

“Leave the room,” he said to the girl, speaking as quietly as he could. “I wish to see Miss Richmond alone.” The latter sentence was addressed to his sister rather than to her maid.

Diana seated herself in the low easy-chair she had been sitting in before Félicie disturbed her. She was careful about arranging the lace at the back of it; she considered that lace was always becoming. She looked up at Cecil, who was standing on the rug before her, too breathless, and apparently too much stunned, to know exactly how to begin the thing he wanted to say.

“ You like my Leonardo-da-Vinci cap, Cecil ? ” she said almost as soon as the wondering Félicie had closed the door. She had not taken the cap off. It was new and becoming; therefore it might have its value in an argument.

Cecil took no notice of the question; he was trying to master himself. He remembered other occasions when he had not mastered himself, and after which he had had to endure much remorse.

He held out the letter that was in his hand. “ Look at that,” he said to his sister, speaking in hoarse, peremptory tones. “ Read it.”

Miss Richmond had seen that it was from Bartholomew; but she took it quite coolly, and glanced over it.

It was the third letter. Like the others, it was brief and courteous; but, meaning it to be final, Bartholomew had expressed himself a little more urgently. He had added an expression of surprise that his two previous letters should have been disregarded.

Diana, having read the note, put it on a table beside her; then she folded her beautiful hands complacently upon her knee, looking up at her brother from under her half-closed eyes, as if the epistle had contained an invitation to dinner, which she was doubtful about accepting.

“What is the meaning of it?” the young man asked briefly.

“Of this note? It seems to concern a picture.”

“One of the two I told you of when you came back from London. I told you that I had given Bartholomew an order to paint me two.”

“Mere sketches, I understood.”

“It doesn’t matter what you understood. There are things I wish to understand now. . . . You have opened two letters addressed to me?”

“I have, dear.”

“When was it?”

“Oh, some time ago! I think you were out shooting when they came.”

“Where are they, may I ask?”

“I put them into the fire.”

The sudden flush of crimson seemed to spread from the burning spots on the young man’s cheek over his entire face and throat and head. He stood silently. He appeared to have a dread of himself—of some wild, unmeasured strength within himself.

“What was your motive?” he asked, still speaking with as little agitation as he could use.

Miss Richmond smiled slowly, incomprehensibly, irritatingly.

“My dear boy, you have never yet understood any motive of mine,” she said. “You certainly could not understand this. Give it up.”

“If I give it up either you or I must leave Yarrell Croft.”

“You have said so before.”

“I have, more than once.”

“And more than once you have come to

see that it would not be convenient to either of us to leave."

"One has to consider more than one's convenience. Is it convenient to me to have my letters opened, and read, and burned without my knowledge? You have said and done many intolerable things. I think you have touched the limit at last. . . . What can I say to this man? What excuse can I make?"

"Why not tell him the truth?"

"I don't believe you would care if I did."

"Of course I should not care. I should rather enjoy it."

Again Cecil stood silent, baffled, discomfited.

"Do you know the sort of reputation you are making for yourself in the neighbourhood?" he asked at last, looking down into the face before him with less of passion and more of pain than had been there before.

"No," answered Miss Richmond, with animation; "no, I do not. It is always interesting to hear what people are saying about one, and it is an interest of which I have never had my due share. If you know anything, Cecil dear, do tell me!"

“It would have no effect.”

“Pardon me, I have just said that it would have the effect of interesting me.”

“It would interest you to know that you are considered to be developing an eccentricity that shows you to be already on the extreme verge of sanity ?”

“The extreme verge of sanity ! That is a nice, neat phrase. Is it your own ?”

Cecil buried his face in his hands for a moment. What could he say, what could he do in the teeth of such studied and cruel elusiveness ?

“Is it my own ?” he said bitterly. “It seems that nothing is my own, not even my letters. It is maddening, maddening, to be treated like this ; to be treated like a child—nay, worse than any child would be treated by any honourable woman.”

“You are growing eloquent, and you are speaking better grammar than you usually do speak,” said Miss Richmond, leaning her head back against the white lace. Then she took off her velvet cap ; it interfered with the ease of her attitude.

Again Cecil stood silent for a little while.

“And this is all I am to expect from you? You will give me no explanation, make no apology; you will not even give me the satisfaction of knowing your reasons for acting as you have done?”

“I have told you that my reasons are beyond your comprehension,” said Miss Richmond, speaking with the same cool deliberateness that she had used from the beginning.

“You admit, at least, that you had reasons?”

“Certainly I had.”

“They must have been tolerably strong ones?”

“They were very strong.”

“And you are satisfied with the result?”

“The result has not been reached yet. I will tell you if it satisfies me when I arrive at it.”

What could there be behind all this? Cecil Richmond knew but very little of his sister, of the real life she had lived underneath the seeming life. Of her hopes, her fears, her designs, her disappointments, he knew nothing. He had been at school during the time of her engagement to George Kirk-

oswald ; he had known of it, but he had not been interested in it ; and he had no definite idea of the manner in which it had come to be broken off. He had a vague impression that his sister had never cared much for Kirkoswald—that she had never cared much for any one. Affection was not in her way. She seemed, more than any woman he knew, to be capable of living her own life without support from any other life. There was nothing of feminine softness or subjection about her ; nothing that seemed like need of protection, of any guiding or guarding influence. In all things she was self-sufficient, and equal to the emergency of the hour.

He was utterly at a loss now, and it could hardly be expected of him that he should take an annoyance like this quite meekly and quietly, and without making any further effort to arrive at the mystery involved in it. The more he considered his perplexity the harder it was to bear. He hazarded another question after a time.

“ At least answer me this,” he said. “ Was it your intention simply to annoy me ? or have you some spite against Bartholomew ? ”

“I had no special wish to annoy you,” replied Diana considerately. “And I have no spite, as you term it, against your artist. He is probably a fool; but if one felt spitefully toward all the fools one meets, one would have no room for any other feeling.”

Cecil turned away, pained, indignant, still baffled.

“May I ask, then, what you are going to do?” Miss Richmond said, as he opened the door of the room.

“I cannot tell you what I am going to do,” was the reply. “I shall have to consider.”

“Do consider—consider well!” said Diana, rising to her feet, and facing her brother with new meaning in her expression. “I am speaking for your good now. “Be cautious; especially, I would say, be cautious if you are likely to require any further favours at my hands.”

Cecil remained standing there, changing colour quickly as he stood. He understood the threat. Young as he was, he had long ago placed himself in his sister’s power. He was aware that she had but lately discovered some debts of his that he had not confided to

her when he had professed to make a full confession concerning the state of his affairs. That was when he came of age, and found to his intense disappointment that it would take some years of careful management and retrenchment to make him the rich man it had been popularly supposed that he would be. Latterly some considerable losses in the shape of unpaid rents had followed upon the bad harvests; some of the farms were now unlet; and Mr. Damer might have made some rather surprising disclosures if he had been so minded.

All this Cecil knew; and more than once the fact that he had given a commission for two expensive pictures had caused him some slight uneasiness, more especially as he did not know how expensive they might be.

Still it was, of course, very absurd to suppose that he would be unable to pay for them. There would be a scene or two between him and Diana; that he had been prepared for from the first. But he was not unaccustomed to scenes, and he had ceased to be much impressed by them.

The discovery he had made this morning

of his sister's inexplicable conduct with regard to Bartholomew's letters had complicated the affair in his mind considerably.

It would have been a relief to him if he could have taken Diana at her word—if he could have gone down to the studio at Netherbank, and told the simple truth. If he could have done that he might have met Bartholomew without confusion of face, and there would have been no need for him to condescend to subterfuge.

He went into the greenhouse on the upper terrace, and sat there some time with a cigar between his lips, considering what he had really better do now. It seemed to him that it would be exceedingly difficult to do the thing he felt he ought to do; to go down to Netherbank and say that, owing to a mischance for which he was in nowise responsible, the letters had never reached him. Suspicion would certainly arise out of this; besides, it would be disagreeable.

Presently a happy thought struck him—Cecil considered it to be a happy one. There was a man—Sharpe, the plumber—at work among the water-pipes in an adjoining con-

servatory. Sharpe's home was at the upper end of the village of Murk-Marishes. Nothing would be easier than for him to call at Netherbank before he came to his work on the following morning. Sharpe should fetch the picture, and he should take a message—if he blundered over the message so much the better.

It would be easier to explain away anything that might be said by Sharpe, than the words of a deliberately-written communication.

CHAPTER XVII.

DEAD WOODBINE.

“All my life I still have found,
 And I will forget it never,
 Every sorrow hath its bound,
 And no cross endures for ever.”

Lyra Germanica.

GENEVIEVE will always remember that October evening. She was sitting beside her father in the studio ; sitting quite silently. The fire was burning low ; the lamplight threw dim rays among the easels and canvases ; the wind was sweeping sadly over the fields, moaning in the chimney and through the casements. Some dead creepers were tapping plaintively upon the window-pane ; the sound was as if some lost creature were craving help—admittance. Bartholo-

mew sat with his face buried in the hands that rested upon the table. For more than an hour he had not spoken.

Presently a knock at the studio-door awoke him from his reverie. It was certainly surprising. Few people came to the studio; none came so late.

A sudden feeling that was more like fear than anything else surged over him as he opened the door. When he saw that it was Ambrose Sharpe his fear changed to a new despondency.

“Come in,” he said to the man, who was murmuring something unintelligibly out there in the darkness. “Come in. . . . There is only my daughter here. . . . You were saying something?”

“It’s the picture—Mr. Richmond’s picture,” said Ambrose, who had heard about it, and had also gathered in the village that there was something in the affair not easy of comprehension. It was quite well known that the painting had been finished for more than two months, and that Mr. Bartholomew had been daily expecting its removal. Ambrose was a little pleased with his errand.

"It's the picture," he said. "Mr. Richmond told me to take it ower wi' me to-morrow mornin'. He's been ower thrang* to get doon, he said. An' he was sure to like it, sure 't wad be all right."

Bartholomew was pale, and Genevieve felt that her lip was quivering to the sudden strange agitation that had come down upon her father. Pictures which had been sold from his easel for large sums of money, and had won wide reputation before leaving the studio, had been sent away with less emotion than this.

"I am afraid you will not be able to take it to Yarrell Croft without assistance," Bartholomew said to the man. "This is the picture. It is a considerable size, you see."

"It is; but my word it's a bonny one! Why, that's Craig's old house, up again Baldersby Mere; an' there's t' old oak-tree an' all. It's a despert bonny pictur'! But as you say it is sizable; it'll be a matter o' four feet wide wi' the frame. Still, Ah sall allus manage as far as our house. An' Ah can get somebody to help ma to Yarrell wi' 't i'

* Thrang (or throng), busy.

t' mornin'. Ah soll be startin' hours afore you get up; that's why Ah com to-night; . . . An' Ah soll take care on 't—you may trust ma for that."

"Certainly, I can trust you," said Bartholomew, helping the man to put a wrapper round the picture. Then he assisted him with it to the gate at the lower end of the field. Genevieve stood alone in the studio, wondering, listening to the wind that came moaning over the marsh; to the beckoning fingers that tapped with melancholy sound upon the window-pane.

It was some time before her father came back. He was quite pale and calm. Genevieve could see on his face the look of prayer, of thanksgiving, sent up while he was out under the stars. But she saw with surprise, with concern, that there was no sense of relief visible in him as yet. Had the tension been too great to be taken off all at once? Had his whole being been so set to the minor airs of pain that even deliverance from pain could not change the key?

"You are relieved, father?" she said, as they were preparing to leave the studio. "It

is some satisfaction to you that the picture has been sent for."

"Yes, I am relieved, child," the artist replied. "But I am oppressed now by the knowledge that I have borne the strain so ill. . . . And I think there is some other oppression, something that I do not penetrate, or understand. I cannot feel as if it were all over."

They went out into the silent night. The wind swept by in gusts, the clouds were passing swiftly across the stars, the dead leaves rustled in the breeze. Mingled with these sounds Genevieve seemed all night to hear the forlorn tapping of the dead, melancholy woodbine upon the studio window-pane.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“BY A CORN-FIELD SIDE, A-FLUTTER WITH
POPPIES.”

“A nature o'er-endowed with opposites,
Making a self alternate, where each hour
Was critic of the last, each mood too strong
For tolerance of its fellow in close yoke.”

GEORGE ELIOT, *The Spanish Gipsy*.

IF the corn in the fields be ever so scant, there is a little gladness about the harvest-time, a little mirth, much picturesqueness, an odour of old associations. In some of these far-away northern districts the reapers yet reap with sickles, as they did in the days of Boaz ; and the maidens follow after the reapers as the maidens were following when Ruth came timidly into the barley-fields, and when,

“Sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn.”

Dorothy Craven's barley-field at Netherbank had been partly cut; the reapers were still at work at the upper end of the field, though the sun was already dropping over the edge of Langbarugh Moor. The young men and maidens moved in front of the tall barley that was yet standing, waving its pale gold against the dark tones of the upland. Bessy Skirlaugh, in a scarlet shawl that glowed in the last amber ray, was turning the corn lightly on to the bands that her seven-years-old Hannah was twisting; two young men were tying; Mark Ossett and his boy Willie were setting up the sheaves, "stooking" was the word they used; and seeing that the little lad was hardly equal to the task, Mr. Bartholomew came out from his cottage and helped for an hour or two from sundown till after the moon was up. Genevieve with a light rake helped Miss Craven to gather up the stray ears from the stubble.

"This is idyllic, if you will," said Genevieve, resting on her rake, and pushing her wide-brimmed hat away from her forehead.

"It is the best thing left on this earth,"

replied the overtired artist. "If I had my life to begin again, I would live it out of doors, let the cost be what it might."

Presently the harvesters went home ; the men with the reaping-hooks over their shoulders, the women with cans, baskets, babies, bottles, all made up into bundles together. They stopped a little by the stile to gossip ; then a woman came up out of the lane in the moonlight, and along the field-path to where Genevieve and her father were still sauntering to and fro.

"You won't know me. I'm Margaret Sharpe," she said in a pleasant and rather refined voice, "Ambrose Sharpe's wife. And my husband's working at Yarrell Croft. He took the picture home yesterday morning all right ; and Mr. Richmond said 'at Ambrose was to tell you 'at he liked it very much."

"Oh, thank you !" said Mr. Bartholomew, concealing his amusement, "thank you. I hope you haven't had to come up from the village on purpose to bring the message ?"

"No, sir, no, I haven't. But I told Ambrose I'd let you know ; so as he mightn't have to come up here after his day's work.

Good night, sir. . . . There's no message to take back?"

"No, none, thank you. Good night."

A bat came fluttering insanely over the sloping barley-stooks; a late bird flew by on its frightened wing as Mrs. Sharpe went hurrying into the shade.

"This is new experience for you, my father," Genevieve said, having humour in her tone.

"It is, child. But—pardon me—I think we had better not talk of it. I cannot trust myself to talk of it, not even to you. It is amusing; and some day I *may* laugh at it all. But I do not think I shall. I have a curious feeling about it—it is like the oppression that is in the air before a thunderstorm."

"But after the thunderstorm how good it is!"

"Yes, it is good for the man who escapes the lightning stroke."

What was he dreading? Genevieve wondered. Was his poverty a greater trouble to him than she knew? She thought she knew the worst. Only that morning, giving her a small sum for Keturah's wages, he had

smiled and said gravely that his purse was like the widow's cruse, in that it never quite failed; but she knew that more than once it had all but failed; and, sadder still, she also remembered that more than once she had missed small treasures from the studio; and had guessed how they had been packed up and sent away in her absence. It was a terrible strait—its full terribleness being something not to be openly acknowledged even between themselves. It would have been an added pang had they known that it was much more openly spoken of in Murk-Marishes, and in the hamlets beyond. Keturah's friends made no mystery of the growing narrowness and straitness of things at Netherbank; and the neighbourhood was curious about the smallest matters that happened there now. It was interesting to see a stately princess with a fine smile, with golden hair, and cashmere dresses, and Gainsborough hats, and to be impelled to wonder how long it was since she had had a good dinner.

The message brought by Mrs. Sharpe had its depressing as well as its amusing side. It

was evident to Noel Bartholomew that he need expect no other message, and therefore no payment, until the second picture was finished and sent home. He would take care about sending this one home. There should be no invitation to Mr. Richmond to come and approve of his work this time. All the same, Bartholomew said to himself, that so far as his best skill could insure his success, there should be no room for disapproval. He knew himself to be working with more heart at this second picture: it was promising better, and it offered more scope for imaginative work. George Kirkoswald seeing it, expressed positive delight; and he was not given to idle exuberance of admiration.

It was not quite a week after the view of Yarrell Croft had been sent home when George came down. He had not heard of its removal; and nothing was told even to him of the manner in which Bartholomew's three letters had been responded to at last.

The garden scene was on the easel. The ancient archway was completed. The ivy that covered the pillars threw out wild, careless sprays; the clematis on the trellis was

in its summer stage of creamy, profuse blossoming. Beyond the archway there was the old fountain, the interwoven rose-sprays, some tall, waving grasses. The whole space of the foreground in front of the gateway, with the exception of the path, was one mass of graceful, luxuriant, many-tinted flowers. Some of these Bartholomew had painted on the spot; choosing the few weeks during which Miss Richmond had been at Danesborough, to make his excursions to Yarrell, otherwise he had intended to make an autumn scene. He was glad now of the summer flowers, the white Madonna lilies, the crimson Martagon lilies, the great Auratum and Japanese lilies. On the left, some late purple and amber irises stood among the broad green leaves; the tall pale-blue larkspur—Yarrell Croft was famous for larkspurs—stood towering against creamy bushes of syringa. There were poppies here, foxgloves there, with quaint campanulas, and tufted meadow-sweet. Some of these were only indicated as yet, and closer examination showed that the leafier portion of the work needed many a long hour of patient labour.

"You ought certainly to send this to the Academy," George said. "There is an originality about it that could not fail to make its mark."

"Perhaps Mr. Richmond may choose to send it," replied the artist, turning to his work again, and beginning, with a careful hand, to touch some of the iris leaves with sunlight. Genevieve was working at her embroidery, trying to copy some of the poppies in the painting on to a panel that she was embroidering for a screen. "It is like having perpetual summer beside one," she said, looking up at the canvas with unaffected pride. "If ever I give a commission for a picture it shall certainly be for a garden of summer flowers."

Kirkoswald was making a mental note of the remark when there came a tapping at the studio door, Keturah thrusting in her head at the same moment—

"It's Miss Richmond again," she said in a breathless confidential whisper to Genevieve. "I showed her inta t' sitting-room, an' I told her you'd be comin' in a minute; an' I didn't tell her 'at Mr. Kirkoswald was here."

Genevieve smiled, but she also blushed quickly. Why did Keturah think that it mattered about Miss Richmond knowing who was there? She saw that George had heard. There was a change on his face, a tightening of the muscles about his mouth.

"I will go up with you, if I may," he said, "I think it will be better." And Bartholomew hastened to add that he would follow immediately. Of course Miss Richmond had come to pay for the picture that had been sent home; or at any rate to arrange about the payment. The idea struck him with a sudden shame even as it occurred to him. Was this the lesson that poverty was teaching him—this low care, this unworthy eagerness? Had he declined so far in so short a time? He felt with bitterness that the sense of unexpected relief was almost an agitation to him.

Miss Richmond was sitting on the little chintz-covered sofa when Genevieve went in with George Kirkoswald. She had arranged the cushions about her, placed her feet on a footstool, and she sat there holding out a white, languid hand, hardly moving her

coral-red lips in answer to Genevieve's greeting. She looked at George Kirkoswald with a quite inscrutable look in her eyes; even he could not discern its hidden meaning.

She sat in the same impassive manner when Bartholomew went in a moment or two later. It was as if she had come expecting to be entertained, to have only to sit and watch, sit and listen, sit and judge.

"I expected to find you here," she said to Kirkoswald, with intentness in her tone. "That was partly why I came. I have not seen you since that day in Soulsgrif Bight, when you disappeared so suddenly. . . . How was it?"

"How was it that I disappeared? I think it was because I had to see Smartt again," Kirkoswald replied curtly.

"How inconvenient of Smartt! It must have spoilt your day,—your great day," said Diana with mild superciliousness. "Think of having to do without your luncheon, the climax, as it were! It fell very flat, I assure you—if that is a consolation. Didn't you consider the luncheon a very flat affair, Miss Bartholomew?"

“ It was not lively,” Genevieve said. “ But for me it was not the great event of the day ; that had come before.”

“ Of course for you—you are alluding to the Canon’s speech ? ” Miss Richmond said. “ It was beautiful. It comes back to me like an echo every now and then—always just when I can’t listen. Then I seem to hate the sound of it, to wish that I had never heard one word that the Canon said. As a rule, I don’t remember such things very long. But I remember that. It is curious, isn’t it, to remember words like those quite distinctly, and to feel that they have no power over you ? ”

“ I should say that the mere fact of your remembering them proves that they have power,” said Bartholomew.

“ Should you ? ” said Miss Richmond, looking into his grey, weary face with curiosity. How old the man was seeming ! and how shabby and strange he looked ! A contemptuous reply had been on her lips, but for once she held herself in check. Was Bartholomew ill ? Had some new mental suffering fallen upon him ? It was impossible that her

small experiment could have anything to do with the change in him—it had been so very small ; and besides, it was over. Some conflict was going on, even now, so it seemed to Miss Richmond, as she sat holding stronger emotions in restraint than anybody dreamed, stronger and stranger. Did she know herself which was hatred that stirred within her, and which was love ? She felt isolated as she sat there in the middle of the little group, isolated and defrauded. She told herself that she was not misled by the dark look of pain that was upon Kirkoswald's great square forehead, and in his deep-set eyes. He was happy enough, confident enough, self-satisfied enough. And the pale, yellow-haired girl beside him—what need had she to be so pale, to sit there with that look of sadness and patience about her mouth ? They had all they wanted, these two. That letter of hers had had no real effect beyond making them keep their engagement secret for awhile. That was something, but it was not enough, not enough for a wronged and despised woman. She could do more yet,—she would do no more, she told herself as she sat

silently there, resting her chin upon her white, beautiful hand, and looking out with a placid smile. In striking any one of the three she would strike them all, this she knew certainly ; and more modes than one of striking were within her reach now.

All this, and more than this, passed with the swift indefiniteness of thought across her brain. There had been no long pause when she spoke again, turning to George Kirkoswald :—“ Do you know I was reading a volume of your poems yesterday ? ” she said, speaking in her usual deliberate and expressive way, a way that made her lightest word seem important.

George started visibly as if he had been stung. “ I am sorry you had no more interesting book,” he replied, trying to seem as unconcerned as might be under this unexpected attack, for such he felt it to be.

“ I could have had no book more interesting to me,” Diana said. “ I had half-forgotten it. I had entirely forgotten some of the poems. They seemed to strike me in quite a new light—especially some of your ballads, those written in imitation of the

ancient ballads. Of course, you remember them all? What a wonderful one that long one is, *The Doom of the False Knight*. It made my blood run quite chill."

"It makes mine run chill to think of having written it," said George, adding extenuatingly, "I was only eighteen years old when I wrote it, if that is any excuse."

"Eighteen! Really! What an interesting boy you must have been," said Miss Richmond, with a smile that, taken together with the words, roused Genevieve's indignation to the utmost. "I wish I had known you then,—at the time when you were writing such poems as those about false knights, and inconvenient lovers imprisoned in moated castles, and forsaken maidens pining in lofty towers. I am sure you were more interesting then than you were later when I knew you better."

Almost George Kirkoswald wished, as he sat there enduring with all the patience he had, that Miss Richmond would as a matter of mercy do the worst that it was in her power to do, then and there.

Unfortunately it had occurred to Diana also

that there might be mercy in such a course ; other things occurred to her, and she was in no mood to be merciful. She was decidedly sorry when George Kirkoswald suddenly rose and prepared to depart.

“ Ah ! that is to escape my criticisms,” she said, putting out her hand with the old, fine, graceful gesture that he knew. “ If you had remained I had some passages ready to be quoted, and also a few that seem to me to need elucidation. Never mind : I shall make you explain them to me another time. . . . Good-bye. They say authors are never appreciated among their own people ; but don’t forget that you have one appreciative reader.”

The look of annoyance on Kirkoswald’s face as he went out was almost amusingly unmistakable.

“ I used to think that George was not of what I have heard him term the *genus irritabile*,” said Miss Richmond, using the Christian name with even more than her ordinary deliberateness.

“ I am afraid that all people who produce anything—that is, any really creative work—

are more or less sensitive about it," replied Noel Bartholomew.

A pause followed. It was inevitable that Bartholomew should wonder what judgment Diana Richmond had pronounced upon his work, and whether she was about to give expression to her judgment now. Quite unintentionally he had made an opening for her to do so; yet he shrank from her opinion as a man whose eyes have been hurt shrinks from the flare of gaslight. Still, he waited for it.

And Diana knew that he waited for it. It was a little power in her hand, and with the quick instinct that the people seem always to have who find pleasure in giving pain, she divined instantly that the highest refinement of pain would be an absolute silence on the subject. If he spoke, she was prepared; if he did not, she was prepared also. No adverse criticism of hers could fly so straight to its mark as a dead silence. She gave emphasis to it by leaning back a little on the sofa where she sat, and by slowly turning the rings that were upon her hands, as some women do when they sit alone and forget

themselves in thought. Was she hesitating because of Genevieve's presence there? The thought struck the girl suddenly, and she felt a little sorry that it came so late.

"You will excuse me?" she said, turning gracefully to Miss Richmond. "I will look after some tea. Our small handmaiden is not always to be trusted to remember."

Then she went out, and still Miss Richmond sat silently among the cushions, silently turning the turquoises to the pearls. She was perhaps unaware of the smile that was creeping over her face. It was not an encouraging smile. Bartholomew felt that it would be impossible now for him to make any allusion to his own work. He might have asked Miss Richmond to go down to the studio, and see the garden scene; but consideration restrained him from doing that. It was not finished, and he knew too well the unfavourable impression often produced upon an undiscerning eye by an uncompleted painting. No, he would be patient and silent —silent on that subject, at least; courtesy required that he should try some other. But Miss Richmond anticipated him, speaking as

if she had been pondering all the while over his last remark, and was only now ready to reply to it.

"I suppose it is so," she said; "I suppose that people who do what is called imaginative work do get over-sensitive. . . . I think they always have miserable lives. Years ago, when I used to read, I often read biographies, and things of that kind. I did it to please another, and it was a kind of task; but I did my task, and I have my reward now, in feeling that I am a little less stupid than I should have been. Still, I am stupid, I know. But are clever people happier for being clever? . . . Are *you* happy, for instance?"

The question was like a shock; it came with so much force, so strong an undertone of feeling. Nothing but a simple, straightforward answer was possible to Bartholomew.

"No," he said plainly; "no, I am not happy."

Miss Richmond was looking at him now with the look which had been on her face that day when she had come down to the studio, a look from which all superciliousness, all

hardness, all defiance was gone, a look that might have been on the face of any tender, loving, suffering woman that Bartholomew had ever seen. Again it moved him to emotion, and again his emotion had something in it that was akin to dread.

“Neither am I happy,” she said, speaking slowly, yet with agitation. “I am not happy, and I am not good. I might be both; it is yet possible to me to be both; I feel that. And oh, how I long for these things—for both these things! Can you believe me when I say so? It is true; I feel that it is true. I know surely that if I were simply happy, with a simple, common kind of happiness such as others have, then I might be simply good. . . . And I could do good, too. I could make others happier; I should desire to do that, and I should have some heart in doing it. . . . You cannot tell how different it would be if I had hope of some day being a little less weary, a little less lonely, a little less unhappy than I have been—than I am.”

“But, surely, in your position,” began the grey, work-worn, care-stricken artist—“surely

in your position it is not difficult to be happy ! You speak of doing good ; it is in your power to do almost limitless good. You know that as well, or perhaps better, than I know it ; and you must also know the happiness that comes of making others happy. It is a platitude I am saying, perhaps . . . ”

“ It is a platitude ; it is worse, it is a delusion,” said Miss Richmond. “ And I was not speaking of generalities ; you knew that. If I used vague terms I had a definite meaning, and you knew that too. But you chose to ignore it. . . . You say you are not happy, yet you put happiness away from yourself as if it were not worth having even when it is held out to you.”

There was a pause, a little clatter of tea-cups outside the door ; then Keturah came in, round-eyed, smiling, bringing relief on a tea-tray. But Miss Richmond would not stay for tea. Genevieve came into the room ; Bartholomew went out to see if the carriage was there, and then Diana went away, silently, graciously, magnificently, as she had come.

And she left silence behind her ; but it was a loving, understanding silence. She

left disappointment also, to be taken with the dinner of herbs next day, and for many days ; but it was not an uncheerful disappointment. And it had its lesson. The teaching of that time bore fruits of insight and sympathy after many days.

CHAPTER XIX.

“SHALL LIFE SUCCEED IN THAT IT SEEMS TO
FAIL ?”

“Oh ! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud !
I fall upon the thorns of life ! I bleed !”

SHELLEY, *Ode to the West Wind*.

LESS than a week after Miss Richmond and George Kirkoswald had met at Netherbank, George received a telegram from York ; it was from Mrs. Warburton, the wife of his friend. Her husband had been suddenly taken ill in London. He was there alone, at a strange hotel ; and she herself was too ill to go to him. Within an hour after the receipt of this message George was on his way across the moor to Gorthwaite Station, a small station on a new branch line running direct to Market Studley. He had written

a note which old Charlock was to take to Netherbank.

It was a sunny November morning when the note came down. The harvest was gathered at last, all save a few acres of beans that stood blackening on the upland slope here and there. The leafless twigs swayed lightly in the breeze; a few dull gold leaves were on the beeches; great white whorls of yarrow flowered in the waste places. It was winter, but winter at its best and mildest.

Noel Bartholemew read the note aloud; and he could not but see the change on his daughter's face; the fading colour, the look that was half-disappointment, half some keener pain. He worked on a little quite silently, touching the anthers of a white lily with crumbling red gold; then, at last, he spoke.

"If there was anything that you could tell me, Genevieve, my child, you would tell me without hesitation?" he asked gently.

The quick colour came to the girl's face. She had been standing near the window, looking out over the hedge of bright green

holly, where the red berries were clustering and ripening among the leaves. She turned when her father spoke, and came near to where he sat. Her face was full of perplexity; but she raised her eyes unshrinkingly to his.

"You are meaning with regard to Mr. Kirkoswald?" she said. "If you ask me to tell you, father, I will tell you all that there is to be told."

"But you would rather I did not ask?"

The girl hesitated.

"You know that silence is not congenial to me?" she said, looking into his face rather pleadingly. "That is, silence between you and me. I have never kept anything from you before, you believe that?"

"I believe that—nay, more than that, I believe that it is a pain to you now. I am certain there is pain somewhere. I want to save you from it, that is all."

"But if I would rather endure it, if I have a strong reason for wishing to endure it a little longer, you will not be angry?"

"No; I will not be angry."

There was a mildness about this reply that

had a meaning of its own, a meaning that had to be suffered.

“I hardly meant that, father,” Genevieve said presently. “How could I, since you have never been angry with me in my life? . . . I meant, will you still trust me?”

“Of course, my child, I trust you. And what is equally to the point, I trust Kirkoswald also,” said the artist, speaking with some fervency.

The girl rose, and bent over the grey wan face that was so intent upon the white lilies. Was there a tear behind the kiss that she gave?

“You may trust him, my father; you may trust him. I have promised to trust him always. . . . There, that is a confession. It is all I have to confess.”

“Not quite all, little one,” the artist said with a quiver in his voice. “Not quite all. He cares for you, that I know, that I have seen—he cares intensely. And you care for him, that, also, I think I have perceived. But I want to know one thing, I will ask only one; do you care enough for him to feel that he can make you happy?”

"If he cannot, then I cannot be made happy. If this world holds any happiness for me apart from the happiness you make for me, then he has the key of it. I care so much as that; will that content you?"

"If you are contented, my darling, if I know that I may leave you contented and happy when I go, then I shall live out my own few days the more happily for knowing it. . . . Kiss me again, child. I shall do some good work to-day."

Was Genevieve a little relieved also? Canon Gabriel, going over after luncheon with Mr. Severne, found a lightness in the atmosphere that he had not expected to find. Rumours of Bartholomew's unprosperousness had reached him, and pained him; exaggerated stories of the Yarrell Croft pictures had flashed out of a seeming darkness. Then when he had questioned Mr. Severne he had found the curate unwilling to answer, unwilling rather than unable; and this evasiveness had been more suggestive than any disclosures that he could have made.

"I think myself that Mr. Bartholomew is not doing well," the young man had said

with a new gravity in his round blue eyes. But he would not say what made him think so. He was more observant than people knew ; and it was not to be expected that his powers of observation should fail him when he went to Netherbank. He had understood the meaning of the few small changes that had been made in the hospitalities of the little household far better than George Kirkoswald had understood them ; indeed, it could hardly be said that the latter had noticed them in any particular degree. He was not naturally curious ; and being a little beyond the reach of Rumour with her hard eye and malevolent tongue, he had not been aroused to any suspicion.

In excuse for him—if he need excuse—it may be said that there had been very little at Netherbank to awaken suspicions unawakened elsewhere. One year had not wrought any noticeable change in the dainty arrangements of the little sitting-room ; the fresh flowers, or green, graceful leaves were always there ; there was no sadness in the canary's song ; and the little place bore the searching rays of the afternoon sunshine far better than

any of the dusty, shabby rooms at Usselby could bear it. George Kirkoswald had missed nothing from the accustomed brightness and freshness that he appreciated so keenly ; and it need hardly be said that he had missed nothing of brightness or freshness in Genevieve herself. She had been a little extra careful in her daintiness, that was all. The cream-coloured laces that she wore had been washed and ironed a little more frequently ; if she had a shabby gown she wore a pretty muslin apron with knots of ribbon all about it ; and when the feather in her hat lost its curl, she filled the brim with scarlet rowan-berries and fronds of fern.

This afternoon she had put on a pretty white muslin cap of her own making, fastening a knot of rose-hips and a bit of green myrtle in the front of it. Another knot of red berries adorned the front of her dress, which was of white blanket-serge. She had taken a little extra pains because of the happiness that seemed to be floating about the studio since that conversation in the morning ; and her father had given her an extra kiss for her care. Nevertheless she was a little

conscious of her rustic decorations when the Canon went in.

“ Altogether, I feel to-day as if old Winter were trying to persuade me that he is as charming as any spring,” the Canon said, being careful not to make his compliment too personal. He was relieved; and relief is a thing very apt to effervesce and overfill the cup of satisfaction.

Mr. Severne was admiring the garden-scene, which Genevieve was explaining to him. Bartholomew had done painting for the day, the light of the November afternoon no longer serving his purpose. And he was glad to rest, glad to sit and talk with a friend awhile. It was the best thing that could come to him in life now. If any change came to him, if, for instance, Genevieve should leave him, then he would go and live a little nearer to Thirkeld Abbas; so that he could drop in at the Rectory whenever the loneliness that would come upon him should turn to heartache. He had said this to himself before; and he thought of it again now as he drew a wide arm-chair to the fire for the old man, and stirred the coal into a

blaze. The flames went up, crackling, rejoicing. The warmth spread outward, mingling with fine sympathies; quiet, strong yearnings; low-toned utterance of the ebb and flow of thought.

The conversation came round to the artist's own affairs presently; but the Canon only touched lightly upon them, seeing it was not required of him that he should do more. "And it is all mistaken, this rumour, this gossip?" the old man said. "I am glad of it, more glad than I can tell you."

"I do not know all that has been said, of course," Bartholomew replied. "But there is no truth in this that you tell me you have heard, none at all. The young man was thoughtless, careless, forgetful, anything you will, and perhaps rather wanting in courtesy at the last. But there was nothing dis honourable, nothing. I have told you all. And it is over now. I am working at the second picture with rather more zest for my work than I have had for some time. I hope I shall be able to keep it up through the winter, till I get some of these other things finished. If I can do that then

life will go a little easier than it has done of late."

There was a brief pause. Genevieve seemed to be instructing Sir Galahad, having a book of biographical sketches adorned with engravings for a text.

"His life used to have quite a fascination for me when I was a child," she was saying. "It was so full of suffering, and he seemed to bear it so bravely. Now I do not like to read it at all, because I cannot help seeing that he did so much to bring his suffering upon himself."

Bartholomew smiled, and looked at the Canon as if struck by some appositeness in his daughter's words.

"Sometimes it seems as if we all of us brought our suffering upon ourselves," he said, speaking in a lower voice than before. "It is so easy to say, 'Had I not done this; had I only done that!' But which of us knows what the end of that different event would have been? And small events widen to such appalling results. I once threw a stone into the middle of the harbour at Deep-haven; it is a wide harbour, and I stood and

watched the circles increasing till they touched the houses on either side. I never forgot that. Sometimes in reading biography the analogy has seemed to me absolutely perfect.”

“Yes; that is one reason why biography is so interesting,” replied the Canon; “and often, at the same time, so intensely saddening. One can trace cause and effect so clearly; and there is indescribable pathos in the idea that perhaps the man himself who was tossed in the widening circles of event was perhaps unaware that any stone had been dropped into his fate at all. I often think of some of our popular contemporaries, and wonder if any of them have any dread of the inevitable biography. Surely all lives are not suited to disclosure, not even when it is a friend who does the anatomizing!”

“Some of them may dread the truth being known,” said Bartholomew. “But for myself I have more pity for those of whom the truth never can be told in its integrity; and who know that it never can. They live marred lives; and the world looks on disapprovingly, not knowing what it is that mars and hinders,

and perhaps inventing some stupid, blind theory to account for what it cannot comprehend. . . . I wished once to take the biographer's pen in hand myself—that was years ago. I had a strong desire to tell the story of a friend of mine, a young artist named David Elseker."

"Elseker! I know the name," said Canon Gabriel; "and I think I know where there are two or three small pictures of his—landscapes. To the best of my belief they hang at Kingsworth Hall, near Bristol. They used to interest me; and I have wondered that so little should be known of the artist."

"Nothing more will ever be known of him now," said Bartholomew. "It is fifteen years since he died; he died at the age of thirty-four; and his death depressed me for weeks. I had watched him from the time he was twenty years old. He was a clerk then in the custom-house at Deephaven; and I tried hard to persuade him to stick to the desk, but it was quite in vain. He used to look at me with his quiet blue eyes as if I had struck him an undeserved blow. When he did come to London to begin his career as

an artist, I tried to help him as a matter of course, but he needed very little help of mine. He was doing well, wonderfully well, when the news came that his father had died suddenly, and I did not see him for a long time after that. When I did see him again I hardly knew him, he was so shattered, so care-worn, so utterly broken. But all the old fire was there, burning away in his keen blue eyes as fast as ever, consuming him, one might say, and say it without exaggeration. He had given up his London studio. He had gone back to Deephaven, and he was working there, endeavouring, as an artist and as a teacher of drawing, to support a household of six persons—his mother, his three sisters, himself, and a servant. He was only seven-and-twenty then ; but he looked at least ten years older, and no wonder. I wondered at nothing after I had been a month at Deephaven ; that was a few years after his father's death. I went there for a little change, choosing Deephaven because David was there, and because he offered to let me have lodgings in his mother's house. I believe he repented of the latter step ; I know I did ;

and I was glad when my month was over. But it qualified me to write David Elseker's biography if I had had the trick of writing.

“It is of David I am speaking, not of his family ; but since his career as an artist, his fame, his very life was sacrificed to them, I cannot ignore them. They must have been utterly blind to their own interests. But it was wilful blindness, since I attempted myself with all the strength I had to open their eyes ; to show them that if they would but bear even a little less hardly upon David's strength he would have some chance of rising. I told them plainly that he might rise to almost any height he chose in his own line ; and that whatever that height might be they would—as a matter of course—share the material advantages of it. But it was no use. David might paint pot-boilers, or he might paint masterpieces, it was nothing to them ; but not an hour's peace should be secured to him by any effort of theirs ; nor one bill the less handed over to him to be paid ; though all the while his very soul sickened at the sight of the worthless work he had to go on producing in shame and

silence year after year; and though everybody who had ever heard of him was wondering at his wasted life, his wasted strength, his wasted talent. It was another case of 'promise' without performance, they said; another instance of mistaken ambition, of an over-vain self-estimate. All this David knew, and felt and writhed under. More than once he made a desperate effort, beginning a picture into which he meant to put his best; but each time some fresh blow came before he was half-way through, and the picture had to be abandoned in order that some miserable piece of commonplace might be produced on the instant for instant needs. . . . Telling the story in this crude way it seems like nothing; but an intense sadness underlies it for me. The young fellow was so keen, so eager, so persistent; and yet he was so patient in his long-suffering. . . . I can't tell you about the end. . . . I was glad when I heard of it; knowing certainly that David would be glad. But I have often wished that the world could have known but a little of the truth, the world that misjudged him, that slandered him when his heart was aching

within him, that crushed him with its hardness while he was bearing burdens too heavy to be borne, that turned a cold face toward him because of his apparent failure while he was suffering something that was almost martyrdom in his craving for a chance of achievement. . . . That is David's story. It would stand for the experience of many another, doubtless; and you will agree with me in saying that the truth, if it could be spoken, would have but little terror for such as he."

There was a pause while the Canon reflected.

"No," he said presently; "no, your friend would probably not have feared the truth; but I think he would have been one of those meant by a recent writer, 'those whose tongues have often faltered and been dumb from very eagerness of passion, and dread lest any words, even the best, should spoil their story.' You seem to regret your inability to write out fully and plainly all that you discerned. Believe me, it is better unwritten. It would not interest. Men as a rule shun the records of failure; while no

book is so popular as the book that tells of a great success in life. . . . But the little you have said is hardly more than a side-light flashed upon your friend's fate. You have spoken of his broken career rather than of himself."

"I have nothing to say of himself. I did not know him. He was hidden under the clouds, one always felt that. Sometimes I could not help speculating on what he might have been. It is certain that he would have been kindly, human, helpful, patient, since he managed to be these at the worst. Under other circumstances it is probable that he might have had distinction among men, that he might have talked brilliantly, for instance, or acted effectively, or lived his life with a certain *éclat*, as some of our modern Art-princes are doing now. . . . I know what you would say, these things are not the highest. That is true; and he did not aim at them, not for a moment; of that I am certain. He aimed at nothing save the doing of the work that it was in him to do. The rest might have followed, or it might not; it would not have mattered, so that his

life-work was done. Still from the highest standpoint all might be better as it was. It might be well that he should fail, well that he should die. That was all that was said of him, that he had failed, and died of his failure. There was a time when I wished myself to have the French epitaph graven on his tombstone :—

“ ‘ Naître, souffrir, mourir ; c'est tout mon histoire.’ ”

“ Not all his history,” said the Canon, “ not all ; only to the end of the first chapter.”

* * * * *

There was a deeper glow on Sir Galahad’s face when the two who sat by the fire turned to the table. He had not been listening to the story of David Elseker, that was evident. “ I have been listening to Miss Bartholomew,” he said, speaking as if he were saying something that he had determined not to conceal. “ I have been listening to her all the while, and I could go on listening. I did not dream it was so late.” When he shook hands with Genevieve at parting, he said quite audibly, “ I—I shall come again soon.

May I come in the morning next time, before luncheon? It gets dark so soon, doesn't it? It's nearly dark now, you know. . . . You will let me come in the forenoon when I come again?”

CHAPTER XX.

“ MAY NOT LIKING BE SO SIMPLE-SWEET ? ”

“ Had she willed it, still had stood the screen
So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and her ;
I could fix her face with a guard between,
And find her soul as when friends confer,
Friends—lovers that might have been.”

ROBERT BROWNING.

THERE was not much news in the letter that George Kirkoswald wrote to Mr. Bartholomew from Halkington's Hotel. He had been sitting up all night with John Warburton, who had passed through the crisis of his sudden illness, but was lying very weak and exhausted in the unfamiliar room. The only familiar thing about him was the dark, rugged, tender face of the man who waited upon his lightest wish with the patience and gentleness of a gentle woman.

It was almost worth while to have been ill, since illness wrought an experience of human loving-kindness that it would be good to remember while life should last.

It was no wonder, then, that the long letter was all broken and disjointed, that it should seem to have been written out of much weariness and perplexity. "Yet I could not refrain from writing," George said. "It is nearly four o'clock a.m. Warburton is sleeping the sleep of recovery. The fire is burning low; every now and then a great shower of hail comes rattling down the chimney, and upon the window-pane. It is just the sort of night when one cannot help 'looking before and after,' and certainly 'pining for what is not.' All night the stillness has seemed empty and hollow, and any sound that broke the lamp-lit silence outside has seemed like a note of wild unrest. I think I have never before had such an impatient desire to be back again in the pine-woods, to hear the soughing of the wind among the fir-tree tops, and the surging of the waves down in Soulsgrif Bight. That reminds me to ask if Miss Bartholomew will

be good enough to look in upon Mrs. Gordon some fine day ? I am anxious to know if the poor woman is feeling less miserable ; if she has less dread of being discovered ; and I shall also be glad to know that her son is looking stronger. Please tell him that I have selected a number of new books, and as soon as Warburton is better we are going to look out some views to be exhibited by lime-light. Of course I expect to be back again for the next concert. I think Severne said he had arranged it for the 23rd. Yes, certainly I must be back again before that time. It is long enough to have to look forward. I have thought myself not too happy at Usselby of late, and, indeed, I have had reasons for thinking so ; but I know now that it was happiness to be there—greater happiness than I can know anywhere else. And it will be greater than it has been. No experience weakens my hope of that."

So the letter went on, aimless, discursive, as letters always are when the people who write them keep just outside everything they are longing most to say. If George might

have added a postscript for Genevieve, bidding her read between the lines of this ineffective writing, then perhaps he would have been happier, and Genevieve would have been happier too, for the letter was not satisfying.

It was a chill, grey morning, with long, low boomings of wind in the distance, as if a storm threatened. Genevieve thought of little Davy Drewe ; she always thought of him when the weather was wild at sea. His little model of the *Viking* stood there on the bracket over the bookcase, still and straight, though the strongest gust swept the ivy on the thatch outside ; the leaves shivered on the pane ; the Prince sat silent on his perch ; the fire burned low and dim ; George's letter was lying in Genevieve's lap. She had read it twice through ; but the second reading yielded no life, no sympathy, no warmth. There was no answer to the strong cry for human nearness and intercourse that had gone up so often from that little room of late. The days were better when such cries had no meaning, when each hour brought sufficient for the

needs of the hour. It was not all good, that tasting of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Things could no more be as if she had never touched that fatal tree.

It could hardly be said that it was want of faith that beset her soul. "I trust him," the girl said to herself, "I trust him wholly. I am not so low that I should have doubt or fear. It is not that; it is that I need him, that I want to hear him speak, to hear him speak to me, to see his eyes looking into mine with all the truth and all the meaning of all life in them. I am forgetting his face; I cannot picture him in the darkness that is everywhere. I cannot see him smile, and I cannot see the frown that comes upon his forehead even when his eyes are all alright with laughter. . . . Ah! to think that it should be so, that one should be nothing alone, nothing apart, that he should be there, I here, and each of us no more than

'The divided half of such
A friendship as had master'd Time.'

But it is not mastering time; it is not mastering circumstance; it is not yet complete

enough, nor round enough. . . . George, if you were here now I would speak ; at all risks I would speak, and I would compel you to speak. And you should know that my love is great enough, great enough for love’s greatest destiny—a perfect sacrifice. There are times when I feel that it is written, and I love you enough to know that I can read the writing when it is held down to me. . . . If I read it I shall obey it ; I shall not fail.”

A ray of sunlight shone out between the clouds; a kind, good face, all smiles and premature blushes, passed the window in haste. It was Mr. Severne, and Genevieve was smiling in response even as he entered the room.

“I—I asked you if I might come in the forenoon, you know,” he said, speaking even more nervously than usual. “I know you are always busy; but you didn’t say I mightn’t come. . . . Is Mr. Bartholomew out this fine morning ?”

“No ; he is in the studio. We will go to him. But is it a fine morning ? I thought it was so cold, so dull till just now ?”

“Yes, till just now. The sun shone out

exactly as I was getting over the stile, and I took it for a good sign. I couldn't help doing that, you know. I always like the sun to shine out like that when—well, when I am doing anything important."

"Is it an important thing to make a call at Netherbank?" Genevieve asked. She was already feeling brighter, more genial, because of this genial face and voice that she had come to like so much. She was trying to stir the fire into an appearance of greater hospitality. Perhaps it would be better not to disturb her father in the middle of his morning's work. Mr. Severne was talking, meanwhile, rather glad of the noise that Genevieve was compelled to make.

"Yes," he said, "it has always been an important thing to me to come to Netherbank. I remember the first time that I came; I was awfully nervous about it. And you *were* good! I was laughing away like anything in about two minutes, and had forgotten all about my dread. I never met anybody who had the art of putting people at their ease a *you* have."

"I thank you," said Genevieve, smiling.

“ Then, will you be quite at ease now ? Will you sit there, please ? I am going to work at my embroidery a little, since you are here to talk to me, or read to me, or sing to me. I never touch my needle now when I am alone. I am not happy enough for that.”

Mr. Severne laughed. “ Well, that is puzzling ! ” he said.

“ Is it ? It need not be. Needlework doesn’t occupy one’s brain in the least ; it leaves one at liberty to brood over all manner of things. I always think the women who can sit and sew quite contentedly for hours together, with no one to speak to, must be delightfully happy women.”

The curate kept silence for a little while, blushing, thinking, looking up now and then with a pained, perturbed look that Genevieve could not understand.

“ Do you know I’ve been more than ever afraid lately that you weren’t happy ? ” he said in a low voice that seemed to be broken by its own weight of sympathy. “ And it has made me unhappy to think of it. I couldn’t have borne to think of it at all if I hadn’t wished—if I hadn’t hoped that,

perhaps—perhaps— something might come to make you happier. . . . I have thought of it almost always lately, almost ceaselessly. . . . It seems too much to hope. It is too much ; but I couldn't help it ; I couldn't put the hope away, not till I asked you, not till you had said yourself that it couldn't be. . . . Must you say that, do you think ? Is it impossible that I should ever make you happier ? Is it . . . ”

It was only a little exclamation from Genevieve that had stopped him, a little cry of surprise, and pain, and self-reproach.

“ Oh, Mr. Severne ! ” she said, her eyes wide with distress, her lips tremulous. “ Have I been so stupid ? so cruel ? Believe that I did not know, that I did not see. How could I—how could I know or dream of it ? . . . I am afraid that I was caring—that I was thinking only of some one else. . . . But, oh, I am sorry—you will believe that I am sorry ? ”

There was silence again in the little room—a long silence. There was no blush on Mr. Severne's face when he spoke again.

“ I know you did not see,” he said, speak-

ing quite calmly, quite strongly, and with a greater self-possession than had ever been his before—"I know that you did not dream of it. And so far from being cruel, your kindness has been so great, so beautiful, that I have wondered at it always. It has been the greatest joy that I have ever known. . . . It will always be that. . . . I know I hardly need ask you—you will be just the same to me? This—this mistake that I have made will not come between us? You will not blame me, nor be cold to me?"

"It shall never come between us!" said Genevieve, holding out her hand. It was trembling; her eyes were full of tears. "If it make any change it will be a change toward greater friendliness, a better understanding. And I think—let me say it, though it may seem harsh just now—I think that you will understand yourself better. You will find that it is a sister's love you want from me, a sister's care, a sister's friendliness. You miss these; I have always felt that—that you were missing your home sympathies. Then try to think that this is home. Come more often, and talk more freely on any subject you will.

It will be better so; we shall forget this sooner."

"But I shall not want to forget," said Mr. Severne, lifting his grave blue eyes; and Genevieve saw that there was a new light in them, a new power. Whatever pain had struck him, the force of it had turned to spiritual strength even as it fell. "I shall not want to forget. There will be no sorrow in it by-and-by; that is, not much, not if you will be just the same to me, and try to care for me, as you say, as a sister would care. . . . I shall be very happy. . . . But I should like to know that you were a little happier too."

"And I shall be; believe that. I am not so—so self-sufficing as I used to be," said Genevieve, remembering and growing sadder. "Only this morning when you came I was feeling lonely, and I was glad to see you—very glad."

"Were you?—were you really? . . . But I can't be of any use," said Mr. Severne, his voice dropping to a more despondent tone. He could not help having his own thoughts about things. If Mr. Kirkoswald were at the

root of Miss Bartholomew's unhappiness, he could have no hope of being helpful in such a matter as that. He could only stand ready—a little on one side, but always so that he could be ready when the moment came. He had an instinctive feeling that the moment would come—the moment when he might be of use, when he could put all that pure, unselfish love of his into some small act that nobody would notice. Perhaps Genevieve might notice it. If she did, she would offer him thanks—sweet thanks, with sweet smiles; but she would never know. No, she would never know all that her words of that day had meant to him. All the way as he went home with his heartache and his sense of failure he was picturing to himself his future life, his future work, his future silence. There would be silence all the way quite on to the end; but there would be peace underlying it. Even now he was not what people call wretched—not utterly wretched. His sorrow would remain, but it would pass onward and upward into joy. It was as if he stood by a newly-made grave, thinking of the flowers that would grow there when the time of

flowers had come—passion-flowers of faith and prayer, with chanted praise instead of songs of birds—music that should pass the night till the breaking of another and a fairer morning.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SONG THAT ENID SANG.

“ Now meeting doth not join or parting part;
True meeting and true parting wait till then,
When whoso meet are joined for evermore,
Face answering face and heart at rest in heart.”

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

THE hoarse thunder of the winter wind came nearer and louder, the dead leaves went by sweeping and whirling into the upper air; the desolate roar of the sea at the foot of the cliffs came ever and ever more distinctly to the heart that listened and was sad.

Noel Bartholomew sat before his easel, working mechanically, all through the storm. He might not stay to feel the depression upon his spirit; he might not stay for the winter darkness that seemed to bring an unwillingness and unfitness of its own; he might

not stay for a nerveless hand, nor for a brain weighed upon, oppressed with dread, overwrought with anxiety.

Genevieve sat beside him all through the day ; and more than once half through the long, chill November night. She was working at her embroidery, and with a purpose in her working now. There had been a little scene, half sad, half amusing, one morning. The postman had brought a cheque representing the three panels for the screen that Genevieve had been embroidering all through the summer.

“ You have sold them ! ” Mr. Bartholomew exclaimed ; surprised, pained, incredulous.

“ Yes, my father, I have sold them. What will Mrs. Caton say ? ”

“ It will hardly matter about Mrs. Caton,” the artist replied bitterly. Then he tried to recover himself, or to seem as if he did.

“ Does Mrs. Caton represent the world for you now ? ” he asked, speaking in a gentler and more natural way.

“ Yes, to a certain extent. She seems to have her hand on the pulse of it very finely. But since she interprets it, it cannot after all

be such a very evil world. If she knew that I had sold my lily-panel, and had received something like fourpence farthing an hour for my work, with the materials thrown in, she would begin to be good to me from that very moment."

" You think she would pity you ? "

" There is a pity which is akin to love ! "

" And there is a pity which is akin to contempt."

" So there is, father ; and happy are the people who need no pity at all," Genevieve said, trying bravely to keep the sadness out of her face. " Perhaps we shall not need it always, and if we should, we will try to bear it. . . . Shall I sing to you a little while you sit there ? " she continued, placing a chair for him by the fire, and opening the piano. " Shall I sing you the song that Enid sang in the day of her broken fortune ? I will be Enid, and you shall be Earl Yniol.

' Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel with smile or frown ;
With that wild wheel we go not up or down ;
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great.
Smile and we smile, the lords of many lands ;
Frown and we smile, the lords of our own hands ;
For man is man and master of his fate.' "

Genevieve sang on to the end of the song resolutely, but she was grieved for the expression of her father's face, for the quiver of his lip. She had not known that he had looked at the cheque, knowing that he looked upon an answer to a passionate, half-despairing prayer, prayed in the night while she was sleeping. It was an answer—an answer granted with a special and unlooked-for trial in the very granting. Such answers come to us all at times, baffling the heart that yearns only to be grateful, to understand its own gratitude. Like other trials, it is a trial of faith, and needs to be met with non-reasoning steadfastness of trust as in a wise and wide-seeing Father. The trial passes, peace comes, and perhaps light with the peace. It is then that one has grief if faith has failed in the hour pre-arranged for its testing.

Noel Bartholomew's faith had all but failed him, though he had striven manfully to support it. But such strife is hard when the pulse beats low with failing strength, and when the soul is left to wrestle alone, unministered to by any man or angel. The angels do not always come. Sometimes they

come, but unawares, and we know them only when they have departed.

Out of this root of pain Bartholomew's faith grew again. Though the relief that had come to him was very far from being full relief, it was sufficient to deliver him for a time from the haunting dread of actual want which had been present with him so continuously of late. He could bear to feel himself growing weaker, sadder, more and more unhopeful, but he could not bear to see the thinner oval of his daughter's face, nor to see the wan whiteness that was stealing upon her lip and cheek. Now he had hope that such changes as these would at least be arrested.

The storm went on, and the days went on, until at last the garden-picture was completed. Bartholomew was not satisfied with it, but it was less unsatisfactory to him than the other had been. The Canon and Mr. Severne came in just after it had been placed in its frame. It stood there, a great glow of summer light, summer feeling, summer colour.

“I like it here,” the Canon said, “and I should probably like it on the walls of the

Academy, but I have some doubt about its looking well at Yarrell Croft. There will be nothing dark enough, sober enough, to throw it up. Don't you feel concerned about the effect of it there?"

"Yes, I am concerned enough," the poor artist said, feeling that his unprofitable anxiety on that head was a very small thing beside the other anxieties that he had. He could hardly care much about the effect of his work with Genevieve sitting there so pale and wearied-looking. She was sitting near the table, helping Mr. Severne to write out a programme for the concert. It only wanted ten days now to the twenty-third.

"And you think Mr. Kirkoswald will be home by that time?" Sir Galahad was saying, looking up with the wistful light that had never gone from his face since "*that day*," as he called it in his own mind. He had not spoken of it—he would never speak of it. Genevieve had no fear; she had only a little sorrow, only a great regard. Nay, it was more than regard; it was love, and he knew that it was love. Some day perhaps it would satisfy him. Meantime if he were not satis-

fied, then neither was he sorrowful. The peace that had always been visible in him, visible through all his blushes and mistakes, his smiles, his hesitations, his awkwardnesses, was more than ever visible now; and Canon Gabriel seemed to watch his face with a great tenderness. He knew what had happened, and Noel Bartholomew knew it too; but it was Sir Galahad himself who turned all regret, all embarrassment into simple, quiet, open acquiescence.

"It is good of you to let me come, and to be so kind to me," he said to Mr. Bartholomew, as he shook hands and went out into the dull wintry weather that was upon land and sea.

The picture was sent home that same evening. Sharpe took it, with Keturah's brother, Johnny Glead, to help him. Very little emotion went with this second and larger work. There could be no pleasure connected with it, with the idea of its reception, its appreciation.

The inevitable exhaustion followed upon the completion of the picture. There was nothing to be done but some patient waiting,

which is often the hardest task a human being can have. It was very hard in this instance, so hard that the father and daughter began to count the hours of every day almost as anxiously as they counted the few shillings that were left to them. No word passed the lip of either concerning the master of Yarrell Croft. He had again sent a message —a message precisely similar to the one he had sent before. “Mr. Richmond said I was to tell you that he liked the picture very well.” That was all. Bartholomew looked into his daughter’s face when he heard it, with a look that was curiously mingled and confused. There was wonder in it, and amusement, with a little disdain, and not a little hopelessness. The girl’s lip quivered.

“We shall always know better now how it is with the poor, father,” she said with a faint pain in her tone.

Bartholomew paused awhile before he replied; then he said—

“Yes, when it is all over I may perhaps be grateful to Mr. Richmond for having opened my eyes. I feel as if I had lived a blinded life till now, blinded to all real suffering,

real pressure of anxiety, to the existence of such a thing as actual oppression."

A few more days went on. A little more hunger, a little more need of the common necessities of life had to be endured, and was endured bravely. The fire was carefully kept low, though the weather was chill and windy. Keturah was considerately kept patient, but it was not difficult to keep her patient. She moved about with a new quietness, as if the sorrow and strain that was in the house were a kind of sickness. And she knew as well as any one knew that the next moment that came might put an end to this strange trial. There was something almost pathetic in the way she sat or stood with her eyes fixed on a certain point of the edge of the moor. If Mr. Richmond came over that way she could see him pass between the two stunted trees that grew one on either side of the path, and it would be something delightful to have to run down to the studio, or into the little sitting-room, with the news that Deliverance, as represented by Cecil Richmond, was coming through the whin and heather of Langbarugh Moor. The watch-

ing was weary work, but she would have her reward if she might watch to any such good purpose as this.

But in the event there came a morning when the last shilling had to be sent to Thirkeld Abbas for bread. Keturah went down to buy it, and as soon as she had gone Bartholomew sat down with a white resolute face to his daughter's writing-table.

"Must you do it?" Genevieve said, stooping to kiss the lined, troubled forehead.

"Yes," he replied; "yes, I must do it. I must write to Mr. Richmond. . . . You see the alternative would not fall upon myself alone."

When the afternoon came Bartholomew consented to go out of doors. He would go anywhere now; he would do anything. Of course he would go down to Soulsgrif Bight if his daughter wanted to go there. Perhaps the sea-breeze would lift the pressure from his brain a little. Something was weighing there very heavily. It almost seemed as if the dull wind-swept sky itself had a ponderousness that could be felt. The air was heavy and chill; the dead grasses that were

whitening in the hedgerows bent and shivered to the breeze ; the great grey sea swept across the bay from point to point in wild ceaseless unrest. The day seemed full of sadness, of unhopefulness, and the harsh boding scream of the sea-gulls wheeling beyond the edge of the cliffs struck cruelly upon the ear when the hands were stretched out supplicatingly to Nature for a little comfort, a little soothing, a little promise for the days to be.

There were only a few people about in the Bight. One or two were looking out anxiously over the rocky beach to the north. The tide was rising. Right across where the white edges of the waves gleamed against the dark cliffs there was a solitary figure, a woman's figure apparently. "Were they watching her ? Was there any fear ?" Bartholomew asked of an ancient mariner who was leaning over the edge of the quay.

"Noä, sir, there's nought to be feared," said the man, "not unless she worsens on't. . . . Ya'll be knawin' wheä it is ? Ya'll ken it's Ailsie Drewe ?"

"Ailsie!—It is Ailsie!" Genevieve exclaimed ; then she hesitated, fearing to ask

the question that was upon her lip. But the old man needed no questioning. He had all the eagerness of his class to be the first to tell a tale of sadness. This was sad enough, and it was also a little strange. "It is like as if we'd all on us expected it," the old man said, "knawin' 'at Ailsie was expectin' it neet an' daäy, an' leuked out for t' poästman ivery mornin', storrm or no storrm, wiv a feäce as white as driven snew. She niver kind o' settled te nougħt till t' poästman had turned his back te goä up t' bank yonder. An' then ten daäys agone she had a dreäm. She says it warn't no dreäm, but she were wakkened out of her sleep wiv a splash o' water, an' a great sudden light 'at she said was no shine o' the sun, nor o' the moon, but were a great sea-shine, an' a boät far out upon it wi' little Davy an' his father makkin' for some hills 'at were all aglow wi' the light 'at struck up oot o' the sea. . . . Ah saäy myself 'at it would ha' been better if she'd niver heerd nougħt no more. She were calm an' quiet all that daäy, as calm as if she'd been lift up to heaven a bit, an' let doon agen.

“But 'twas all ower next daäy. A letter com fra the owners—there was a little book in it—an' the letter told how Davy had had a desper't fight for his life. The ship had struck on a reef, somewherees oot foreign, an' the little fellow had knocked aboot all neet among the breakers in a tool-chest; but t' chest were empty when it washed up i' the mornin'. . . . 'Twas ower much for poor Ailsie, that was. Mr. Stuart, him up at the readin'-room yonder, read the letter for her, an' she sat still as a steäne when he read it, an' she niver shed no tear. She's niver shed noän yet, so they saäy. But ivery tide, dayleet or dark, she walks out there, up an' doon amang the rocks leuking for the little lad. . . . She's leuking now. Ah reckon she'll be goin' on leuking.”

The dull grey sky was growing greyer, the chill wind more chill than before; the sea-gulls came flapping overhead, crying with hoarse cries. Yet still the dark figure wandered up and down among the rocks where the cruel sea was crawling to the cliffs beyond. Noel Bartholomew and his daughter went on over the wreck-strewn

sands—the wide house of mourning that Nature offered to the bereaved woman for her use; veiling her light meanwhile, and draping the dark cliffs in purple shadow.

There was almost a smile on the mother's wan face, in the grey dreamy eyes—dreamy with looking out over unseen distances. She had made no attempt to provide herself with any change of dress. Her plaided shawl was over her head, her coloured print gown fluttered in the wind.

"Ya'll be come for the little book," she said, speaking in a tone that was milder and more gentle than she was wont to use. "I've left it at home; but Ah'll get it for you next time you come if t' tide be up. Ah'll be sure to get it. 'Twas so said i' the letter 'at the laädy was te hev it. . . . Davy had said that; an' they put it i' the letter."

"Perhaps you would like to keep it?" Genevieve began, speaking sympathetically; but Ailsie quickly interrupted her.

"Keep it! Oh, whisht, miss, whisht! Ah'd niver keep it. Davy 'll ask aboot it—he's sure te ask when Ah find him. An Ah'm boun' te find him. The sea's boun' te give

up her dead. It gave Davy up before, you know, an' then he came back to life. An' Ah'd like to be here when he's given up again. So Ah can't goä an' get the little book now, you see, miss—not till t' tide's over t' Kirkmaister's steän yonder. Then Ah'll goä."

And all the while the great white waves were sweeping upward, always upward, leaping and dashing hungrily upon the big brown boulders that stood together in stern resistance at the foot of Soulsgrif Ness.

Genevieve tried to comfort the poor woman a little, but she seemed as one who did not need comfort, as if she did not even hear it. She went on talking herself, softly, wearily; and in a very little time it seemed as if she had always talked so, always looked out over the sea with eyes that had no vision in them.

Leaving her there, a solitary figure watching and waiting among the dark rocks where the white sea was rushing and sweeping, they went up to the reading-room. There was warmth there and rest and cheeriness. Some half-dozen men and lads of the place were enjoying the unwonted luxury of pictorial

newspapers. One or two were deep in unlikely books. Wilfrid Stuart was arranging the platform for the coming concert—it was to be on the next evening but one. There was a decided change in the appearance of the violinist of the cottage-door. He came quickly forward, moving with the help of a stick. There was a smile on his face, the wildness had all but gone from his eyes. It was easy to see that reconciliation had at least begun.

“Mr. Kirkoswald asked us to come in and see how you were getting on,” Bartholomew said; “but I suppose you will have heard from himself by this time?”

“Yes, I have heard,” said the young man. “I had a letter this morning with a parcel of books and magazines. I am glad that Mr. Kirkoswald will be here for the concert. . . . Would you like to see the ivy-wreaths that my mother is making?”

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